

Part II Continued

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ENCLOSURE

The delegate from the AIT Secretariat gave Asturias a scolding lecture on anarchist doctrine. The Socialist and Communist Parties seek the conquest of power, said the AIT. We seek to destroy power altogether. How can we co-operate with such people? Do not forget that the leaders of the UGT are at the same time the leaders of the Socialist Party, and that both organizations gave assent to the brutal repression of the CNT when the socialists took part in the Government.^{1.}

In spite of the sweeping AIT attack on the Workers' Alliance, the Secretariat approved local agreements for a definite specified purpose and pointed to the joint action of the UGT and CNT in the general strike of Zaragoza as an example.^{2.} One after one, the regional delegations censured Asturias and then, against the lone vote of the Asturians, passed the following resolution:

Because the plenum considers that Asturias, León y Palencia have, by their pact with the U.G.T., and by the procedure employed, broken the agreements of the last national Plenum of regionals, and because it feels that the importance of this situation is such that it cannot make a definite decision, it agrees:

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report of the CNT National Committee, under the title, "Boletín Extraordinario del C.N. Sobre los Sucesos de Octubre de 1934". See Solidaridad Obrera, Nos. 1224-30, 1232-42 (March 15-22, March 25 - April 5, 1936).

1. Internal Report ..., op. cit., pp. 19-21.

2. Ibid., p. 22.

That a national conference of syndicates within a period of two months be held to discuss the "revolutionary labor alliance", the agreements of which conference will be obeyed by the entire organization.¹

The plenum also criticized the CNT railway workers' organization. The FNIF had attempted, in May and June, to secure a pact with the Sindicato Nacional Ferroviario (UGT) for the purpose of advancing economic demands on their employers. The UGT railmen would consider a united front only if the national CNT and UGT organizations arrived at one first. The letters which passed between the anarcho-syndicalist and socialist rail union secretaries in July and August show that the CNT group kept pressing for an immediate joint campaign while the UGT rail syndicate preferred to delay such action until a revolutionary situation was imminent.² Both CNT and UGT rail organizations thus assumed postures which were the reverse of the course being pursued by their parent bodies. It was Largo Caballero who was propagating the united front now, right away. The CNT kept putting off the socialists with, "We will meet you in the street on The Day."

Throughout the summer of 1934, the official CNT maintained this attitude of aloofness toward the frente unico. Revista Blanca pronounced it:

1. Internal Report ..., op. cit., p. 33.

2. Ibid., pp. 38-42.

... a grouping of a political kind at the service of the governing party in Catalonia; set up under the auspices of the Esquerra, with the main object of weakening the influence of the C.N.T. among the Catalan workers.¹

Our immediate problem, said Solidaridad Obrera, is the reorganization of the CNT. We will do much more for the cause of the revolution by revitalizing the CNT than by frittering away our energies on pseudo-revolutionary fronts which serve only as a pretext for the socialists to vault back into power.² The socialist youth organization presents Largo Caballero as if he were the big miracle-man of the Spanish revolution. But he is still what he always was,³ "a lucky plasterer with more cleverness than brains."

It was in fact necessary for the CNT to stress the reconditioning of its own forces. Since the racking experience of December 1933, confederal militants had been jailed and the CNT driven to keep up a constant barrage of propaganda on their behalf. But the April amnesty of the right-wing Cortes was extended primarily to the monarchists who had quickly succumbed in General Sanjurjo's farcical promunciamiento of August 1932.

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1. "Consultorio General", XII, No. 297 (September 28, 1934), 750.
 2. "Los socialistas y el frente unico", No. 866 (July 12, 1934), 1.
 3. "El socialismo en España: Un partido que no quiere perecer", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 868 (July 14, 1934), 1.

Aside from the amnesty campaign, the CNT was forced, particularly in Catalonia and Aragon, to carry on many of its activities underground. The extreme right wing of the Esquerra maintained a virulent antipathy toward the CNT and especially the FAI. Led by a Catalan doctor, José Dencás, a member of the Generalitat Government who rivalled Companys for power, and by Miguel Badia, the Barcelona chief of police, this fascist group, the Estat Catalá, used every opportunity to attack the confederal organization. It even had its own uniformed shock troops, the escamots.

Again and again, the Catalan CNT pleaded for the right to live a legal life. Elsewhere in Spain the CNT once more enjoyed the privilege of public meetings and fairly unfettered press freedom. Some syndicates even in Catalonia were functioning normally. But in Barcelona CNT strikes were declared illegal, trade-union meeting halls locked and newspapers were often suspended.¹ The Esquerra persisted in keeping the anarcho-syndicalists in a twilight zone between legal and clandestine existence.

The Esquerra had plenty of trouble of its own during 1934. Internally, there was a struggle for control of the party among the several groups which composed it. Externally,

1. On April 10, 1934, Solidaridad Obrera reappeared after 127 days of suspension.

the animosity between the Generalitat and the Madrid Government became critical with the constitutional controversy over Companys' Ley de Cultivos. The anarchists considered themselves internationalists, after all, and were not disposed to become handy bulwarks of Catalan nationalism in another of those stupid feuds between one group of politicians and another.

In July the Lliga, defeated in the Generalitat elections of early 1934, brandished the economic power of its big industrialists at the Esquerra with a lockout of 5,000 CNT textile hands. It was the workers of the National Confederation of Labor who went hungry, though, not the members of the Catalan Government or of the Unión Industrial Algodonera.¹

Earlier in July, a two month strike of 3,800 Catalan textile foremen was ended. But Solidaridad Obrera announced that there were already nearly 100,000 workers in the textile industry on strike and that 60,000 more workers were employed only every other day.² In Sallent the potash miners stopped

1. According to Ministry of Labor figures, over 700,000 Spaniards were unemployed in April 1934. Well over half of these persons were rural laborers. "Estadística oficial de obreros en paro forzoso en el mes de mayo", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 856 (June 30, 1934), 6.

2. "Asistimos a una peligrosa ofensiva patronal", No. 859 (July 4, 1934), 1. Textiles are the most important manufacture of Catalonia. In the summer of 1934, the industry employed about 500,000 workers in Barcelona and 200,000 elsewhere in the region. Ibid., No. 888 (August 9, 1934), 6.

work while in Asturias, 15,000 members of the UGT and of the CNT Sindicato Unico Minero de Asturias returned to the mines.^{1.} In Zaragoza and Jerez de la Frontera members of the building trade struck in solidarity with construction workers in Madrid.

In Levante the steel workers of Alcoy continued a strike for a forty-four hour week in emulation of earlier conflicts in the same industry for the same reason in Zaragoza, Madrid and Valencia. Textile workers of the official CNT in Alcoy came to an uneasy truce with the Opposition textile syndicate in order to take common strike action. The urban transport strike in Barcelona yawned into its ninth month. Dencós solved the dispute in Sallent by simply dismissing four hundred miners and jailing fifty more. It was a difficult summer for the National Confederation of Labor.

But the CNT still struggled to recover strength. In August CNT reappeared in Madrid for the first time since December 9, 1933. It arrived just in time to announce that Manuel Villar, the Argentine editor of "Soli", and Alejandro Gilabert, who succeeded him, had both been imprisoned. In the South of Spain, however, the Andalusian Regional was able to hold a plenum in the second week of August. The

1. Both the UGT and the CNT syndicates complained that the strike order had been sabotaged by the communist (Stalinist) Sindicato Minero Asturiano.

Andalusians refused to take part in a united front so long as the UGT maintained silence concerning its revolutionary pretensions. Yet the plenum promised to support the UGT in "struggles of an economic and moral character" where CNT assistance would be decisive.^{1.}

Mariano Vázquez expressed the most widely-held view within the CNT when he declared the Andalusians to be mistaken. The only time the UGT will call a strike, said Vázquez, is when the UGT leaders, who are also socialist deputies in the Cortes, want to embarrass the Government. Should we, for the sake of a specious solidarity, become a plaything of the politicians who massacred us?^{2.}

The Alianza Obrera was making little progress in the CNT., and the testing time was drawing near.

G. The Opposition Movement

We must now give notice to the activities of the Opposition Syndicates during the spring and summer of 1934. It is of the first importance to remember that in membership and influence the treintistas were far inferior to the rest of the CNT. Even by May 1936, the Opposition Syndicates

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1. "Los Grandes Comicios de la C.N.T.", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 893 (August 15, 1934), 6.
 2. "El Frente Unico en las Luchas Económicas y Morales", CNT, No. 320 (August 21, 1934), 3.

had not quite reached 70,000 members, and in 1934, the figure was 10,000 less.^{1.} But the treintistas¹ breakaway from the CNT was of course a very important development in the anarcho-syndicalist movement under the Republic. And for our immediate purposes, their role in stirring up discussion on the Alianza Obrera is of significance in spite of the fact that they failed to persuade the CNT to join it. The treintistas were, after all, the only proponents of the Workers' Alliance in Catalonia and Levante who could plausibly claim to be in the anarcho-syndicalist tradition. Indeed, the Opposition press practically became the organ of the Alianza.

The treintista movement opened 1934 most inauspiciously. In January Angel Pestaña resigned from the Federación Sindicalista Libertaria. He announced that he intended to form the Partido Sindicalista Español, which would "accept the electoral struggle and politics".^{2.}

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1. "Los Sindicatos representados en el Segundo Congreso Nacional Extraordinario de la C.N.T.", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1269 (May 8, 1936), 3.
 2. "What, then, [said Pestaña], will be the institutions and organs on which the Syndicalist Party will establish its program? On three only: The Syndicates, the Cooperatives and the Municipalities. And as a binding link on the national level and a synthesis of the common and peculiar functions of each one of these organs, on the constitution of a higher organ, which in the present regime is called the State. We can call it that too, or better, call it National Confederation of Municipalities. But the name does not matter; what interests us is the essence. We want to claim for the producers, for Professional, Scientific,
- (Footnote continued on next page)

At a time, said Juan López angrily, when the possibility of fascist victory is very near, Pestaña, "with the half dozen who follow him", causes a serious rupture in one of the forces supporting the Alianza

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Artistic and Literary activity, the direction of Society, the governing of the country, the orientation of things in general, the organization of the economy"

With respect to agricultural economy we are going to suppress the latifundio and the minifundio. But not so as to divide up the land into individual parcels, which atomize it without advantage to the general economy.

"Some of the expropriated lands will become the property of the Municipalities or of the State or National Confederation of Municipalities, which will rent it for cultivation to the Peasants' Syndicates or groups of Peasants who ask for it"

The Syndicates, transformed into co-operatives and directed by the workers in line with the guidance given by the economic organ of the State or other national body, would become responsible for production and thus would supplant individualist industrial organization. Consumption would also be regulated by Co-operatives.

All productive activity, with certain exceptions, will be undertaken within the Syndicate concerned or professional corporation or organization. These Syndicates will enjoy complete autonomy except in those spheres of action where general laws rule for the common good. These laws will be made by the delegates of the Syndicates, Co-operatives and professional corporations assembled in a National Chamber of Labor. This National Chamber will prepare a general economic plan for the country on the basis of economic reports from Regional Chambers.

"The Syndicalist Party will accept the electoral struggle and politics, not as an end, but as a means for attaining its goal as soon as possible" "La Verdadera Posición de Pestaña", Sindicalismo, No. 57 (March 14, 1934), 3.

Obrera.^{1.} Federica Montseny pointed to Pestana's Syndicalist Party program with disgust and concluded triumphantly, "the end of a gangrene."^{2.} "Pestana, Fallen Angel", quipped Felipe Aldiz.^{3.}

Juan López became the new Secretary General of the FSL and Francisco Arín, the Subsecretary. In late January the Catalan FSL groups held a regional plenum and censured Pestana's secession. The FSL, said the conference, admits all workers who accept the principles and tactics of revolutionary syndicalism.

... The F.S.L. was created to be a school for forming an elite of militants

The F.S.L. ... cannot admit a revisionist current which is trying to incline it toward politico-electoral interventionism, that is class collaboration. Even admitting this current as a minority means automatically dividing the members of the F.S.L. or maintaining a latent schism within it.

Whoever adopts this revisionist position, expressed as a fraction within the F.S.L., must at the same time be considered outside it.^{4.}

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1. "¿Sindicalismo Fascista? Todo eso es agua de borrajas", Sindicalismo, No. 62 (April 18, 1934), 2.
 2. "El Partido Sindicalista Español", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 841 (April 17, 1934), 6.
 3. "Pestana, Angel Caído", Revista Blanca, XII, No. 277 (May 11, 1934), 410.
 4. "Acuerdo adoptado en un Pleno de las Agrupaciones de Cataluña", Sindicalismo, No. 51 (January 31, 1934), 2.

FLS plenos were also held in Huelva, Levante and even Aragon. The FSL set two goals for itself: strengthening the position of the syndicalist movement and establishing more Alianza Obrera committees at the local level. In Murcia, Tarrasa, Villanueva y Geltrú and Valencia, treintistas spoke at united front rallies with representatives of other groups in the Workers' Alliance.

In March Domingo Torres for the Opposition Syndicates and Diego Parra representing the FSL announced that an Alianza Obrera had been organized in Valencia. Some syndicates which had formed a Frente Unico de Luz y Fuerza managed to carry out a brief strike in Catalonia following the twenty-four strike of March 13. They got no help from the CNT. The transport union in Valencia, controlled by the Opposition, won higher wages with a strike in the same month.

The treintistas continued to plump for the Federal Socialist Republic as the common denominator of Alianza Obrera aspirations.

We have ... repeatedly said that the Alliance cannot follow either "all power to the socialist party", or "Libertarian Communism", or even all power to the syndicates. [We] must [follow] something which can cement all these forces together¹.

1. "El problema de la unidad en la C.N.T.", Sindicalismo, No. 74 (July 11, 1934), 1.

When the dispute on agrarian laws developed between Catalonia and Madrid, Sindicalismo declared the Workers' Alliance to be unequivocally on the side of the Rabassaires. On June 17 this position was officially adopted by the first Catalan Conference of Local and Comarcal Committees of the Alianza Obrera.^{1.}

This regional Alianza meeting was marked by disagreement concerning the correct line of action in the tense political situation in Catalonia. On one side were ranged the treintistas, led by Juan López and Manuel Mascarell, Secretary of the Regional Committee of the Opposition Syndicates, and on the other was Joaquín Maurín of the BOC. The treintistas were supported by Andrés Nin of the Izquierda Comunista, and Maurín by José Bonet of the Sindicatos expulsados de la C.N.T., a BOC satellite organization.

The Regional Committee of the Alianza Obrera urged the organization to defend Catalan autonomy against the rightist attack from the national Government. The official CNT of course interpreted such policy as support of, if not collaboration with, the Esquerra.^{2.} Nin, for the Regional Committee,

1. "El problema de la unidad en la C.N.T.", Sindicalismo, No. 71 (June 20, 1934), 1.
2. See, for example, Jaime R. Magriñá, "Para combatir al fascismo no es menester ayudar a la 'Esquerra'", CNT, No. 343 (September 18, 1934), 4.

further advocated the expropriation of the agricultural landowners, as well as an intensification of the campaign to create local united front committees. The goal would be to move toward the Socialist Republic.

Maurín's quarrel was not so much with the purpose as with the pace of the Regional Committee proposals. He wanted the Workers' Alliance to declare a state of war, attempt a seizure of power and proclaim the Catalan Republic. By so doing, he argued, the Alianza Obrera would wrench the initiative from the Catalan bourgeois leftists and in a few days all Spain would be able to build the Federal Socialist Republic! Maurín's position was a minority one but he was able to induce the Catalan Alianza Obrera Conference to pass the following resolution:

If the counterrevolutionary Government of Madrid attacks Catalonia and, on that account, the Catalan Republic is proclaimed here, the Workers' Alliance will support the movement, trying to assume leadership of it, with the object of guiding it toward the triumph of the Federal Socialist Republic.¹

But the treintistas were not satisfied that fascism in Spain could be averted by the securing of a united labor front in Catalonia alone. At the First Congress of the Federación Sindicalista Libertaria, which was held in the middle of July, the FSL gave the Socialist Party just two

1. "La Conferencia de Alianza Obrera de Cataluña", Sindicalismo, No. 72 (June 24, 1934), 3.

months to take a concrete position on the Alianza.^{1.} What the feselistas really wanted was a National Workers' Alliance Committee. They feared that a revolution might flare up with no organ to direct it nationally and without any constructive plans worked out for the day after.^{2.} And they had little faith in the results of anarchist spontaneity.

With the vast majority of the Catalan CNT opposed to the Alianza Obrera anyway, treintista ultimatums to the socialists must have seemed almost presumptuous. But Juan Peiró continued to insist that the socialists and the UGT should put the united front on a firmer footing than a fragmentary pattern of local organizations. After all, said Peiró, the Alianza sprang from the initiative of the FSL and the Sindicatos de Oposición, and both these organizations have remained loyal to the pact. Other elements, specifically the socialists and communists, are taking advantage of the Alianza to make propaganda and recruit members for themselves.^{3.}

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1. "El 1.^{er} Congreso de la F.S.L.", Sindicalismo, No. 75 (July 18, 1934), 2.
 2. "La Alianza Obrera y la F.S.L.", ibid., No. 77 (July 31, 1934), 1. Beginning with the issue of July 24, 1934 (No. 76), Sindicalismo was published in Valencia.
 3. "Ambigüedades, no", ibid., No. 79 (August 14, 1934), 1.

The treintistas were heartened by the events of early September. At 2 a.m. on Saturday, the eighth, a general strike of twenty-four hours began in Madrid. It was called by the socialists in protest against an important assembly of Catalan landowners in Madrid. In Asturias, on the same day, another general strike was declared by the Alianza Obrera as a reply to the gathering of rightist chieftain José María Gil Robles at Covadonga with the youth section of his Acción Popular. In Madrid, the CNT rallied its forces in support of the strike, and of course the confederal organization took part in the Alianza Obrera action in Asturias. These two strikes show the power of the proletariat when united on a national level, shouted Sindicalismo.^{1.}

The official CNT however drew different conclusions from the events of September 8. Not only did the CNT object to co-operating with the socialists because of ideological rejection of joint action with any political party. But in this particular instance the anarcho-syndicalists believed that the socialists were using them as tools to prove to both the Right and to the moderate republicans the necessity of admitting the Socialist Party to the Government. Said the CNT Local Federation in Madrid:

1. "!!!Viva la Alianza Obrera!!!", No. 83 (September 11, 1934), 1.

We did not agree with the strike because it was a maneuver of low politics, into which the Madrid proletariat was dragged with the exclusive object of demonstrating to the sovereign Power of the Republic that no one will be able to govern in Spain without the socialists.

The Samper Government had resigned, the CEDA was preparing to rule; something had to be done, and a pretext for the demonstration was sought. The strike meant a political alert, a call of attention to the rightists: a way of making clear that if the socialists had no majority in the Parliament they were masters of the street in the capital of Spain.¹

We supported the strike, added the anarcho-syndicalists, because it is against our revolutionary temperament to continue working when other laborers are on general strike. Moreover, we did not want to appear to favor the Catalan landlords.² But let us state flatly that our idea of proletarian action against fascism is more revolutionary than simply trying to impress the Government with our strength. Fascism is not just a right-wing phenomenon, "as the 'esquerrano' fascism of Catalonia can testify".³ From now on, concluded the Madrid CNT, let it be clear that

1. "Federación Local de Sindicatos Unicos de Madrid: A los Trabajadores Madrileños", CNT, No. 339 (September 13, 1934), 3-4.

2. Ibid.

3. "Nuestra posición en la huelga de sábado", CNT, No. 336 (September 10, 1934), 1.

"we do not intend to be an instrument of maneuvers directed toward reconquering Power for the socialists"^{1.}

In Barcelona September brought Badia's resignation as police chief. But the assaults on cafés frequented by anarcho-syndicalists continued. There were suggestions that the "Tranquilidad" bar, a favorite CNT meeting-place, be renamed the "Intranquilidad".^{2.} A number of CNT prisoners were released from jail at this time purely because, suggested Jacinto Toranzo, Deno's brother freemasons put pressure on him to do so.^{3.}

In Teruel a construction strike continued and so did lengthy conflicts in Alcoy. The entire region of Jerez was in a state of agitation. Up in Asturias the Regional Plenum of September 16 to 18 reaffirmed its faith in the Alianza Obrera. A supply of arms was discovered by the police in Asturias, and in the third week of September the state of alarm was once more proclaimed throughout Spain.^{4.} Gil Robles

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1. "Nuestra posición en la huelga de sábado", CNT, No. 336 (September 10, 1934), 1.
 2. "Cock-Tail Catalan", ibid., No. 342 (September 17, 1934), 1.
 3. Solidaridad Obrera, No. 916 (September 14, 1934), 1.
 4. Between December 6, 1933, and the October 1934 rising, there were only sixteen days, all in April, when Spain was free from the alternative declaration of the states of alarm and emergency.

looked expectantly toward October 1, when the Cortes would reconvene. The day of the CEDA, he thought, was at hand. October brought more than he reckoned.

CHAPTER X.

THE RISING OF OCTOBER 1934.

On the evening of October 4, 1934, Alejandro Lerroux announced the formation of a Government which included members of the Confederación Española Derecha Autónoma. In Catalonia, Madrid and Asturias the response to this action was immediate.¹

1. My account of the role of the anarcho-syndicalists in the October rising is principally based on the following sources:

Solano Palacio, La Revolución de Octubre: Quince Días de Comunismo Libertario en Asturias (Barcelona: Ediciones "El Luchador", 1936).

S. Cánovas Cervantes, Apuntes Históricos de "Solidaridad Obrera": Proceso Histórico de la Revolución Española (Barcelona: Ediciones C.R.T., n.d.), pp. 335-78.

Joaquín Maurín, Hacia la Segunda Revolución (Barcelona: Gráficos Alfa, 1935, 2nd ed.), pp. 117-68.

Ignotus, El Anarquismo en la Insurrección de Asturias, Peirats, op. cit., pp. 83-94.

Alardo Prats, El Gobierno de la Generalidad en el Banquillo. Barcelona, Octubre 1934. Madrid, Mayo 1935 (Madrid: Imp. Salvador Quemades, 1935).

Internal Report..., pp. 59-123.

A.M. Lehning, "Catalonië en de Opstand in Spanje", Grondslagen, III, No. 5/6 (1934), pp. 97-103.

_____, "Reaktion und Revolution in Spanien", Die Internationale (Organ der Deutschen Anarcho-syndikalistin), illegally printed in Barcelona under an Amsterdam dateline, I, No. 2 (October-November, 1934), pp. 42-48.

"Der Pressedien: der IAA. über Spanien", ibid., pp. 49-51.

Diego Abad de Santillán, "Los anarquistas y la insurrección de octubre", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 944 (January 20, 1935), 4, 6.

Tierra y Libertad, No. 176 (October 11, 1934) and No. 177 (October 18, 1934).

Solidaridad Obrera, No. 932 (October 3, 1934), and Nos. 933-37 (October 10-14, 1934).

A. Catalonia

In Barcelona the entrance of Gil Robles forces into the central Government ignited opposition from two directions. The Generalitat, controlled by the Esquerra coalition of Companys' bourgeois republicans, the Estat Catalá group of Dençás and Badía, the Rabassaires and the small Unió Socialista de Catalunya, believed its political privileges to be in danger. To these groups Gil Robles was a new Primo de Rivera, intent on smashing Catalan political and cultural autonomy. The second source of antagonism to the new Government was the Alianza Obrera, which interpreted the admission of the CEDA as the first overt step on the road to fascism in Spain.

The attitude of the anarcho-syndicalists, who controlled the bulk of the Catalan working class, was of course the decisive factor in this critical situation. If the Alianza Obrera and the Esquerra contemplated really far-reaching retaliatory action, they were in no way encouraged by a CNT manifesto of October 3. Said the Catalan Regional Committee:

Our position has undergone no change, but on the contrary, experience has made us cling to it with greater insistence. To the people, mocked and exploited, there can be no difference between governors... They are all alike in persecuting the proletariat; they are all fascists when it comes to defending privileges.

Let no one allow himself to become a plaything in the fights which may occur, for we have nothing to gain by it....

Let no one second movements which are not guaranteed by the decisions of our organization....

Everything for the C.N.T. Nothing for the

politicians.¹

Nevertheless, on October 4, members of the Alianza Obrera invited the anarcho-syndicalists to join them; the CNT refused. A meeting of Alliance delegates from throughout Catalonia decided to move. Leaders of the Alianza asked the Generalitat not to block a general strike. The Catalan Government agreed.

On the early morning of October 5 a general strike, called by the Alianza Obrera, spread rapidly through Barcelona. Although the CNT was unwilling to support the movement, the anarcho-syndicalists finally abandoned work. In some places, they later complained, they were forced to leave the factories by violence. In Barcelona this strike action was the only significant assistance given by the CNT to the insurrectionaries. The night before the strike, the police had cracked down on the anarchists: first, by arresting many of them, including Durruti, in their homes and in the streets; second, by ordering the suspension of Solidaridad Obrera.

With "Soli" silenced, the Committees of the Regional and the Barcelona Local Federations distributed a clandestine sheet with instructions to its members to open CNT syndicates, closed since December 1933, immediately. The anarcho-syndicalists hoped that the Generalitat would be too busy with its own troubles to fret about the CNT. They were mistaken. The

1. "Confederación Regional del Trabajo de Cataluña: Ante los acontecimientos actuales: A los trabajadores, al pueblo en general", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 932 (October 3, 1934), 1.

woodworkers were among the first to open and occupy their headquarters. Quickly escamots swooped in and began firing on them. Some workers were wounded and elsewhere CNT syndicates which had been opened were once more forced to shut down. The following day, the offices of Solidaridad Obrera were assaulted by armed police.

Dencás took advantage of this strife with the anarchists to make constant broadcasts urging his Estat Catalá patrols, Security and Assault Guards and the Generalitat Mozos de Escuadra to take strict measures against the FAI and the "anarchist provocateurs sold to reaction".¹

By the sixth Barcelona was occupied by these armed groups of the Generalitat, under Dencás' control. The Alianza Obrera and Estat Catalá exerted pressure on Companys to take really drastic action. On the city walls on the morning of the sixth were Alianza Obrera posters with the lead, "Catalan Republic", followed by a demand for its proclamation. During that afternoon the Alliance demonstrated on behalf of an independent republic and conferred with Companys to urge him on.

At eight o'clock that night Companys proclaimed "the Catalan State of the Federal Spanish Republic", and invited "the leaders of the general protest strike against fascism to establish the provisional Government of the Republic in Catalonia...."²

1. Peirats, op. cit., p. 93.

2. Cánovas Cervantes, op. cit., p. 349. Mr. Brennan, op. cit., p. 283, states that Companys' proclamation came "on 5 October". This is incorrect. It was on the sixth.

But the startling sweep of social revolution which Maurín had foreseen for Spain if a Catalan Republic came into being did not occur. The Catalan movement had certain advantages which should plausibly have helped it to victory. The "objective factors" for a revolution, as Maurín's Marxist analysis might have put it, were there. Politically, the rebels took power on the second day of the rising without expenditure of lives. Militarily, they commanded a force of some ten thousand armed men against five thousand soldiers stationed in Barcelona under the command of General Domingo Batet. But the fact that the Generalitat movement was really only political in character was the cause of its defeat. The Esquerra and the Estat Catalá were not interested in any talk of social revolution. Yet the movement was destined to failure without the support of the working classes, the vast majority of them members of the CNT and not easily stirred by so insipid a watchword as a Catalan Republic.

The Generalitat coalition even alienated the Alianza Obrera, its only pretense to a proletarian base in the rising. The Alianza Obrera sought arms for a ten thousand man militia but the Catalan nationalists refused them. Moreover, the armed forces which were under Generalitat control did not act against the very small force of troops whose firing on the Generalitat Palace produced a white flag on the morning of the seventh. The same day the CNT ordered its members to return to work. By the ninth, after two days of some violent fighting marked by shooting at troops from rooftops,

the whole comic opera attempt at revolution was over. The surrender of Barcelona soon brought capitulation in other localities of Catalonia where Estat Catalá, Alianza Obrera and in some places, such as Badalona and Granollers, where the CNT had mastered the situation, or as at Tarrasa, the FAI had decided to intervene.

If the Alianza Obrera could point to its failure to receive arms from the Generalitat as a prime reason for the frustration of the revolt, how much more could the CNT and the FAI allege the same defense for their passive contribution! Since December 1933 the anarcho-syndicalists in Catalonia had been subjected to severe repression by not only the central Government but also the autonomous authority of Catalonia.

...Trade-union life was driven completely underground. The locals of our Syndicates, the Atheneums, the cultural Centres were not opened during all of 1934, and the only governmental problem to the Generalitat was the destruction of the C.N.T. and the extermination of the F.A.I.¹

How then, asked Abad de Santillán, was the CNT to play an active part in the movement? Persecuted, terrorized by Dencás and Badía, our meeting halls locked, our newspapers subject to continual suspensions, thousands of our militants in prison -- and we are accused of betraying the rising! Even in September there were 8,000 of us in jail.²

1. Abad de Santillán, "Los anarquistas y la insurrección de octubre", 4. . . . 4.

2. Ibid.

In the first place, explained Santillán, there was no reason for the CNT to give aid to a purely political nationalist rising of the Esquerra, with no social content. Much less when the Esquerra had made every effort to crush us. In the second place, we had no arms and without weapons, we could not in a few hours mobilize fighting forces when all the strategic points of the city were already taken by the Army and the Civil Guard. It must also be remembered that we had but one source of funds with which to make any preparations, confederal dues. With the crushing unemployment, our economic strength in this respect suffered greatly. It is true that had we known about the rising in Asturias, we might not have given a back-to-work order after only two days on general strike. But communications with the Asturians were broken, and we did not know.¹

B. Madrid

In Madrid the anarcho-syndicalists found further cause for complaint, this time against the socialists. According to Julio Alvarez del Vayo, who with Luis Araquistáin was one of Largo Caballero's chief lieutenants, the socialists had been intensively preparing for the October rising all summer. However,

...Less attention was given to formulating a programme that would give the movement a larger

1. Abad de Santillán, "Los anarquistas y la insurrección de octubre", 4.

objective than simply opposing the presence of the C.E.D.A. in the cabinet. In the event of victory, we needed to tell the Spanish people what we intended to do on all major issues, from the agrarian question to the reformation of the bureaucracy. Although in the discussions among the representatives of the Socialist Left, including myself, the character of the new policy had been established, we failed to make our decisions public and to popularize our proposals.¹

Not until January 11, 1936, fifteen months after the rising, were the goals of the movement publicly known! They were then published in Prieto's El Liberal in Bilbao. The ten point program included land nationalization, except for small-holdings; more irrigation projects; educational reform, dissolution of all religious orders and confiscation of their property; disbandment, purification and democratization of the Army, police and Civil Guard; improvement of labour conditions and provisions for a measure of workers' control but no real attempt to socialize industry; and tax reform.²

"As can be seen", comments Ramos Oliveira, "if the October revolution had achieved its final objective, the Republic would not have gone much farther than it was intended to go at birth. In fact, only the agrarian oligarchy would have suffered gravely."³

But the October revolution was a long way from achieving

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1. Julio Alvarez del Vayo, The Last Optimist (London: Putnam & Co., 1950), pp. 262-63.
 2. The full text of the El Liberal document may be found in Rodolfo Llopis, Octubre del 34: Etapas de la Revolución Española (Paris: Ediciones 'Tribuna', 1949), pp. 32-35. For a paraphrase of the program in English, see Ramos Oliveira, op. cit., pp. 507-08.
 3. Alvarez del Vayo, op. cit., p. 263.

objectives which, in Spain at this time, would have cut much more deeply into the fabric of Spanish society than this moderate socialist is willing to allow. The socialists were not even able to install the revolutionary Government which Largo Caballero had tentatively organized¹, much less see such a Government undertake a reform program. For in Madrid too the rising was a failure and Alvarez del Vayo's criticism of the lack of proper preparation by the socialists and of Largo Caballero's clumsy generalship only lends authoritative weight to the grievances of the anarchists in the capital.

But the pattern of developments in Madrid shows that the anarcho-syndicalists, too, were crippled for effective action by hesitancy and internal differences of opinion.

On October 4 the CNT National Committee, resident in Zaragoza since December 1933, circularized the regional organizations for advice on what to do in the event of a Left or Right coup.² At 6 p.m. on this same day news came to the Local Federation of CNT syndicates in Madrid that the socialists, communists and the UGT would declare a strike in protest at the taking of power by a Lerroux-CEDA Government. Several hours later the strike came, a very large one, and the CNT supported it.

In Madrid the CNT and the FAI set up a Revolutionary Committee composed of members of the Regional Defense Committee.

1. Alvarez del Vayo, op. cit., p. 263.

2. Internal Report..., p. 60*it.*, p. 60.

and twelve others. When, on the dawn of October 5, the Defense Committee knew that the strike declared by the UGT would begin among transport workers at 6 a.m., the Defense Committee ceased to function and the Revolutionary Committee took charge. This group launched a manifesto warning the socialists not to betray the movement or the CNT would take over and channel it toward comunismo libertario. The Regional Committee, still angry because the Socialist Youth organization had declared a strike without notifying the CNT, had just refused an interview with the Executive Commission of the UGT. Now the Regional Committee disavowed the manifesto of the Revolutionary Committee because they had not been informed of it.¹

The Revolutionary Committee met with UGT representatives and tried unsuccessfully to get arms. On the seventh the editors of CNT warned the Committee that the movement was a purely political one and that the CNT would only become "assault guards for the socialists" by supporting it.² A Plenum of Regionals called by the CNT National Committee was held in Madrid on the same day. But because only Aragon, Levante and Centro attended it, the meeting could take no decisive action.³

On October 8 the Revolutionary Committee urged a reluctant Centro Regional Committee that, in view of the news from Asturias and the violent fighting in Madrid, the National Committee should be pressed to declare a general strike throughout

1. Internal Report,... p. 65.

2. Ibid., pp. 65-66.

3. Ibid., p. 61.

Spain. Only such action can help our Asturian comrades, contended the Revolutionary Committee. On the ninth this Committee met with delegates from the Aragon and Levante Regionals and a representative of the National Committee. The Centro Revolutionary Committee was eager to establish a National Revolutionary Committee and to declare that the CNT would assume responsibility for the movement on a national scale, with social revolution as the goal. The Regional Committee of the Centro did not feel the time was ripe.¹

On October 11, said the Revolutionary Committee in a later report, some of its members threatened to resign because their views went unheeded. They did not do so and the following day met with a UGT delegate who advised them that Largo Caballero was not interested in joint action with the CNT. This was the last of the CNT talks with the UGT in Madrid. The Revolutionary Committee was disbanded.²

In 1926 Largo Caballero had said that in Spain there were but two forces, the UGT and the CNT. We respect you republicans, as individuals, he told Marcelino Domingo, but you lack strength. "We would unite with the C.N.T. if we could come to an understanding. But... to what elements of solvency in the C.N.T. do we direct ourselves?"³ In view of the conflicting maze of CNT organs tussling for

1. Internal Report..., p. 66., p. 66.

2. Ibid., p. 67.

3. Rafael Vidiella, "Causas del desarrollo, apogeo y decadencia de la C.N.T.", Leviatán (a socialist monthly review by Luis Araquistáin), No. 10 (February 1935), p. 31.
edited

direction of confederal forces in Madrid eight years later, Largo Caballero might well have alleged this bewilderment once again.

If the socialists found it difficult to secure reliable cooperation from the anarcho-syndicalists, the CNT in turn made a case:

Indalecio Prieto has declared from Paris [wrote Santillán] ... that one of the causes of the failure of the movement which they, the socialist chiefs, did not want because they considered it premature and lacking in preparation, was the abstention of the C.N.T. Can there be talk of abstention of the National Confederation of Labor and censure of it by those who go on strike without warning our organization about it, who refuse to meet with the delegates of the National Committee, who consent to let the Lerroux-Gil Robles Government take possession of the arms deposits and let them go unused before handing them over to the Confederation and the F.A.I.?

In addition to the loss of arms and the restriction to barracks of all Army officers, some of whom had been expected to support the insurrection, Alvarez del Vayo points to the inexperience of the Socialist Youths in street fighting as another cause of failure. Yet:

These adverse circumstances could have been partly offset if there had not been too much delay about giving the order to start. The twenty-four hours during which the government was being formed were decisive. To the very last, Caballero, to say nothing of Prieto, nursed the hope that President Alcalá Zamora would not take into the cabinet known enemies of the Republic. When the news came that the coalition government had been completed, Caballero was with Prieto and a couple of other leaders of the movement. Caballero's comment revealed his stubborn desire to trust Alcalá Zamora: "Until I see it in the Official Gazette, I won't believe it."

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1. Abad de Santillán, "Los anarquistas y la insurrección de octubre", 20. C.R., 1.

Caballero's closest associates, including myself, earnestly insisted that the rising should begin that same night, October 4. In the end Caballero gave in, but by then it was too late. It had to be postponed until the next night. During those twenty-four hours martial law was declared, and this meant the collapse by its own weight of the plan for military co-operation. Under martial law all officers, pro- and anti-republican, were confined to barracks. Thus, when the rising finally got under way, its chances were much diminished. We found ourselves lacking the military support on which we had counted; the Socialist militias were in the street but were unable by themselves to carry out the crucial missions assigned to them.

The inability of the anarcho-syndicalists and the socialists and UGT to secure a working agreement in Madrid, coupled with the shortage of weapons due to the government seizures, curtailed act two of an operetta grown tragic. Fifteen hundred prisoners entered the Model Jail of Madrid during the week following October 5.

C. Asturias

It was not Madrid, however, but the rising in Asturias which lent genuinely tragic stature to the events of October. If the Spanish Civil War was the prelude to the Second World War, the revolt of the working class organizations in Asturias in 1934 was the forerunner of the social revolution of 1936 in Spain.

The most significant fact about the insurrection in Asturias is of course that socialists, communists and anarcho-syndicalists fought together. In Asturias, as we have already

1. Op. cit., p. 266.

shown, the Workers' Alliance was more than pious revolutionary jargon. The events in Asturias demonstrated the advantages of collaboration among the proletarian organizations, and they produced some brief experiments in social and economic reorganization which were to enjoy longer life in 1936. It is too often forgotten that the Asturian experience also gave early indication of those tensions and antagonisms within the united front which were to be made mercilessly clear in the Civil War period.

At midnight on October 4, CNT committees and the anarcho-syndicalist delegate on the local Alianza Obrera Committee in Gijón were told by a UGT delegate that the word had come from Madrid: the movement was to begin the next day. Not the Alianza Obrera but the Socialist Party and the UGT had given the sign for revolt.¹

The CNT later criticized the socialist handling of the October rising on several counts: faulty national coordination, shortage of arms, lack of practice in making revolutions. But no charge was more bitter than that the socialists had declared war in Asturias unilaterally.

When there is bad faith in one of the "pacting" parties, what is formalized in written documents usually turns out to be worthless. The socialists wanted to absorb the other allies with the revolution and they made use of the United Front to rush them into the abyss which would kill all their pain. Two days before the first

1. It is interesting to note that the socialist leader Andrés Saborit is quoted as having told prisoners in the Oviedo jail, on a visit he made to them, "Nobody ordered you to go to the revolution: the order was for a strike". Solano Palacio, op. cit., p. 17.

outburst, the communists, in their daily were shouting desperately because, although included in the United Front, they knew nothing about what the socialists were plotting and they asked to be told where they were headed. Neither did the comrades of Asturias who formed the Alliance know one word when the Revolution was declared (according to the assurances of an Asturian comrade who spoke on October 13 at the Revolutionary Committee of Oviedo) until two hours before going into action.

Moreover, the Socialist Revolutionary Committee gave no place to the comrades, nor did it even recognize the formal, signed promise of Alliance. The anger of the confederates of Gijón and Oviedo when they were advised of the socialist treachery is indescribable....¹

...If [the socialists] sincerely believed that the disaster of the Revolution carried with it the implanting of fascism, they were perfect criminals in not contacting the C.N.T. at the beginning....²

Nonetheless the CNT in Gijón immediately formed a Revolutionary Committee, and in other localities where the anarcho-syndicalists were even less well informed, they prepared to support the movement in the street. Gijón was the center of anarcho-syndicalist strength in Asturias. The Local Federation of Syndicates there had between thirteen and fourteen thousand members, principally steel workers, and the city had for long been the seat of the Regional Confederation of Asturias, León y Palencia. The fall of Gijón on October 10 therefore meant that the influence of the CNT, already a minority in Asturias, would be still more weakened throughout the rising.

1. Internal Report..., p. 100. Italics in original.

2. Ibid., p. 106.

The Gijón anarcho-syndicalists were gravely short of weapons and munitions. Following the general strike there on October 5, poorly armed CNT groups fought against the local garrison and guard forces of over 2,000 men. On the ninth, companies of the Spanish Foreign Legion, or Tercio, and regular Moorish troops from Africa, along with artillery forces, disembarked at El Musel, the Gijón port. Planes came in with bombs and by the following day the fight was over. The Government troops had an excellent troop and supply base for attacking the rest of the province. "With this port taken by the forces of the Government, the revolution could be assumed a failure."¹

Mieres, south of Oviedo, was one of the first places to fall to the rebels, after they fought with the Civil Guards. Here a Revolutionary Committee of socialists, anarchists and communists was established. It quickly organized miners' militias for a march on Oviedo, the principal goal of the revolutionaries. On the dawn of the sixth, equipped with dynamite, they battled their way into the suburbs. Throughout the day, caravans of workers arrived to press the offensive. Street by street they worked toward the center of the city. They took the Trubia cannon factory. The Revolutionary Committee set up headquarters in the Ayuntamiento. Some buildings were burned, including the university, a convent and the Bank of Asturias. The Army and Assault

1. Solano Palacio, op. cit., p. 94 .

Guard forces fought on. By the eleventh, leaflets from the air brought word of the fall of the Generalitat. The Revolutionary Committee counseled surrender. But a new Committee was formed in Sama to continue the fighting.

From Avilés in the North, General López Ochoa brought his column toward Oviedo; General Yagüe's Africans and Foreign Legion joined them. From the South and the East came other troops, led by General Balmes and Colonel Solchaga. A terrible battle for Oviedo began on October 12 which ended days later with the surrender of the workers.¹ Belarmino Tomás, a socialist leader, explained López Ochoa's terms in a speech from the Ayuntamiento balcony in Sama to the people gathered in the plaza below. The last manifesto of the Comité Provincial Revolucionario of Asturias, on October 18, announced the defeat.

Elsewhere the Asturian rising produced brief attempts at economic and social reorganization. The most interesting of these experiments took place in La Felguera. La Felguera and Sama are two towns of about the same size in the Langreo Valley of Asturias. They lie at opposite ends of a bridge -- and in 1934 they were separated as well by revolutionary ideology. La Felguera was anarchist and Sama socialist, and the antagonism between them was of long standing. On this account La Felguera was the most vocal opponent of the Alianza Obrera within the Asturian CNT. During the October rising the

1. Among those who died in the fighting in Asturias were José María Martínez and the brother of Durruti.

4,000 miners, steel workers and other CNT members in the town became the focal point of anarchist strength, just as, after October 11, Sama became the center of socialist activity.

A big explosion on the morning of October 5 in Sama announced the revolt to the other side of the bridge. In La Felguera, the anarcho-syndicalists named a Revolutionary Committee and seized the great Duro-Felguera iron factory, the second largest in Spain, and commenced to armor trucks there for Oviedo. The workers of the Duro-Felguera plant had a lengthy tradition of courageous battle against this enterprise, the most remarkable of which in recent years had been the sit-down strike of June 1931, when they took possession of the foundry in a two-week struggle, and the still more extraordinary strike¹ of nine months in 1932 and 1933.

The La Felguera workers, in popular assembly, proclaimed comunismo libertario, abolished money and socialized the means of production. Supply and Distribution Committees were established and the population divided into wards, with delegates in each to indicate consumption needs in their quarters. The Committee also directed the use of all transport facilities and saw that medical and sanitary services were organized. The La Felguera commune seemed successful enough to cause surrounding communities to invite the advice of anarchists from La Felguera in reorganizing their own societies.² The following

1. See Brenan, op. cit., pp. 263-64.

2. Mr. Brenan (op. cit., p. 268) is correct in stating that comunismo libertario only "lasted for a few hours" in Gijón, but is incorrect in saying that this was the case in La Felguera.

manifesto is a proclamation of libertarian communism in one of the pueblos visited by the La Felguera libertarians:

C.N.T.

A.I.T.

The Revolutionary Committee of Valdesoto,
to the people in general

With the social Revolution triumphant in an infinite number of pueblos of Asturias and provinces, this committee comes to the people to make known to them the following:

According to agreements of the people in assembly, private property and money are abolished. In order to provide for food or other necessities people must apply to the distribution committees resident in Lagarón and Faes, which will hand them vouchers to give to merchants for articles of any sort.

The revolutionary committee warns all those comrades who have not joined the movement to realize the moral fault they are committing, and to do so immediately.

Note. If any merchant or shopkeeper refuses to supply articles, he will be immediately judged by the Tribunal of the people.

Viva el Socialismo Libertario

The Committee¹

The fact that working class representation on revolutionary committees varied from place to place meant a variety of types of social organization, too. In some localities money was completely done away with while in others it was retained for certain non-subsistence goods. A more basic split in the immediate situation, and a disagreement which was to be repeated in 1936, concerned the organization of militias. The

1. Ignotus, op. cit., p. 112.

communists in particular were more given to iron discipline than the anarcho-syndicalists could stomach. The CNT was especially repelled by the establishment at Mieres, at communist insistence, of a Comité de Guerra, independent of the Revolutionary Committee. The anarcho-syndicalists considered such an uncontrolled organ an authoritarian and dictatorial threat to the movement. The CNT also cited Sama as an example of this mistaken centralist approach to revolution, for there the streets were patrolled by Marxist militias which the anarcho-syndicalists complained should have been at Oviedo fighting the enemy.

It is unnecessary to develop the tale of the insurrection in Asturias at further length. With respect to the subsequent repression, Diego Hidalgo, the War Minister, had the gall to tell the Cortes on November 6 that "this idea that the Tercio and the Regulars can use fighting methods contrary to human rights or indulge in rapine, pillage and plunder is just newsmongers' talk." ¹ But Mr. Brennan has cited ample evidence of the savage treatment of the miners arrested during and after hostilities, of the tortures and the executions. ²

The events in other parts of Spain were anti-climactic after the valiant united action of the miners. In Levante the October movement produced a fairly extensive strike called by the Alianza Obrera and seconded in some places by the CNT.

1. Cánovas Cervantes, op. cit., p. 372.

2. Op. cit., pp. 288-89, 296-97.

In Aragon there were scattered pacific strikes while in Andalusia, where there had been a fresh outburst of agitation at the end of summer, the CNT ordered a strike which lasted but two days. The entire Regional Committee was in jail as a result of an attempt made in Seville some days before.

If Bilbao, the stronghold of Indalecio Prieto, the leader of the reformist wing of Spanish socialism, had risen with the intensity of the Asturians, the pressure on the miners would have been far less. But action in the Basque country was confined to general strikes. The socialists seemed to be waiting for the Basque nationalists to attempt a coup before resorting to violence. The Partido Nacionalista Vasco though was no more anxious than the Esquerra in Catalonia for a proletarian social revolution. There was no attempt to establish a Basque Republic. It was not Bilbao or Madrid or even Barcelona -- it was Asturias alone which produced the violent eruption which was to brood over the Spanish social scene in the months before July 19, 1936. "Vencidos", said Cánovas Cervantes, "los mineros asturianos resultaron triunfantes."¹

1. Op. cit., p. 357.

CHAPTER XIOCTOBER TO JULY

The history of the CNT between October 1934 and July 1936 may be divided into the period of sixteen months which preceded the elections of February 1936 and that of five months which separated the elections from the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. The energies of the CNT during these months were directed principally toward four central problems: the fight for legal existence, the struggle for CNT unity, policy toward the socialists and the Workers' Alliance, and the abstention campaign for the 1936 elections.

It would be a great mistake to think that the revolt in Asturias quickly resulted in a close or even tenuous collaboration among the working-class organizations of Spain, and, more particularly, between the CNT and the UGT. Definite currents making for such co-operation did indeed develop within these two organizations in the months between October 1934 and July 1936, as well as in other syndical groups, in one wing of the Socialist Party and some of the smaller proletarian parties. But so strong were the mutual antagonisms among the Spanish labor organizations that they were unable to present a united front against a common enemy, save for the temporary and circumscribed purposes which the Popular Front

elections of February 1936 signified, until stamped into unified action by a full-scale civil war.

If the twenty-one months between Asturias and the rising of the generals produced strong tendencies toward joint proletarian activity, but no definite agreement, the same was not the case with the split in the National Confederation of Labor. Within the CNT these months were characterized by a toning down of the hostility of the first three and a half years of the Republic until, in May 1936, before the start of the Civil War, the Opposition Syndicates re-entered the confederal organization at a Congress of reconciliation in Zaragoza.

A. October 1934 to February 1936

In the days after the October rising, both the CNT and the UGT suffered the smashing blows of repression: the jailing of over thirty thousand workers, the locking of union halls, the banning of press organs and exile to a life of clandestinity. The CNT was in a particularly delicate position. The anarcho-syndicalists had lost revolutionary face in October by shying from the struggle. The fact that the Asturian CNT had, against the will of the other Regionals, participated with valor in the insurrection was worth more as a defense for the poor showing of the CNT than the negative reasons it had alleged. Yet the crucible of Asturias was not

enough to purge the anarcho-syndicalists of their animosity toward the socialists. The CNT still refused the Alianza Obrera. It did not backtrack in its advocacy of electoral abstention. "We are where we were yesterday", said Solidaridad Obrera after three months of silence. "Nothing counsels change in the antistatist ideals of the C.N.T. or modification of its fighting tactics."¹

If the Left returned to power with our vote, reasoned the anarcho-syndicalists, they would use the same weapons against the Right which were used against them and would subject us to a repeat performance of 1931-1933. Remember what Herzen said: You don't want the revolution? Then you'll have war. "We say to the political and social leftists: You don't want the triumph of the C.N.T.? Then you'll have fascism."²

But the stringency of the CNT's non-collaborationist attitude was to be softened as the year wore on. Certainly the treintistas had not lost faith in the Worker's Alliance. On the contrary, they felt that October had been its vindication. The new stress in treintista policy throughout

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1. "La C.N.T. y la Política", No. 938 (January 13, 1935), 1.
 2. "La Verdadera Lucha Contra el Fascismo", ibid., No. 974 (February 24, 1935), 1.

1935¹ was, rather, its campaign for a unified CNT as the only secure basis for a powerful revolutionary entente. Once we have achieved a strong united CNT, we can talk to the UGT and the class parties, said Peiró.²

In the early days of 1935 [wrote Juan López] the Libertarian Syndicalist Federation of Valencia, which had continued to organize and act clandestinely, held a meeting which took place in the beautiful pine grove of La Cañada. The problem of the reorganization of the Alianzas Obreras on the basis of the unification of the C.N.T. was thoroughly discussed at this meeting. There was complete agreement among us, and for that reason, one can say that the first active nucleus which began to work for the reconstruction of the unity of the C.N.T. was the F.S.L. and very particularly the Valencian Group. Because this was where the F.S.L. organ, "Sindicalismo", was published, we began the campaign for unity as soon as it was possible to make the paper reappear. The feselista agreement of Valencia was an interpretation of what the majority of groups were thinking, which meant that "Sindicalismo" was not the expression of one group but of the entire [opposition] Organization.³

It is not difficult to understand why the first strong move for reunion in the CNT came from Valencia and not from Catalonia. In Valencia the Opposition Syndicates were the majority organization while in Catalonia they were the minority. At the CNT National Plenum of Regionals of May 26,

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1. For a brief but lucid account of the chief political developments of 1935, see Brenan, op. cit., pp. 289-95. See Cánovas Cervantes, op. cit., pp. 378-439, for more detailed information concerning the changes of Governments.
 2. "El problema de las unidades", Sindicalismo, No. 6 (May 30, 1935), 1.
 3. "Recordatorio: La Historia No Debe Repetirse", op. cit., p. 22.

1935, in Zaragoza, the Catalan delegate objected strenuously to the general feeling of the plenum that the Sindicatos de Oposición should be readmitted to the CNT. He even asserted the unlikely possibility that the treintistas had planned to execute all anarchists had the October revolt in Catalonia been a success.¹ Levante, on the other hand, was anxious that the Opposition return to the fold and "without humiliations for anyone".² The protests of Catalonia caused the plenum to limit its resolution on the opposition question to a decision "in principle" only, but the resolution showed that feeling in the CNT had come a long way from the plenum of November 1933, which, when the dispute was most feverish, had abjured all approach to the Opposition as distasteful. Said the 1935 plenum:

Considering that the problem of the Opposition Syndicates is a question with many different aspects, which are difficult to reconcile at a national level, the Plenum promises, in principle, that this matter will be handled at a National Congress to which the Opposition Syndicates will be called with a voice [but not vote], leaving the Regionals complete freedom of action to solve the matter in the syndical area under their own jurisdiction in accord with the moral standards of the C.N.T.³

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1. "La verdad de lo tratado en el Pleno de Regionales de la C.N.T. relacionado con el movimiento de Oposición", El Combate Sindicalista, No. 11 (November 15, 1935), 2.
 2. Juan Peiró, "Ese deber está reconocido", El Combate Sindicalista, No. 12 (November 21, 1935), 1-2.
 3. "Comentario obligado a un manifiesto del Comité Nacional de Relaciones de los Sindicatos de Oposición", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1085 (October 8, 1935), 1.

Juan López had called for such a congress himself two weeks before this pleno but stipulated it must be on a plane of complete equality for all syndicates.¹ The treintistas would, moreover, have none of the Catalan offer to welcome individuals who toed the line while rejecting block admissions of syndicates, unscreened for "subversives".² Peiró was pessimistic: the split could be resolved, he felt, only if the CNT outside Catalonia imposed unification. The dissident unions had at heart always wanted to come back, said Peiró, but particularly after Pestaña's breakaway.³

While the official CNT made gestures, even if gingerly, of friendship toward the treintistas, the socialists too took a turn from their recent change of policy. They beat a retreat from the revolutionary tactics of October to the less disquieting and more traditional paths of legality. At least the forces in control of the Socialist Party at this time did, namely the right-wing socialist leader Julián Besteiro (who had opposed the October movement) and the centrist Prieto. Largo Caballero, the party president, spent several months in jail after October and when released

1. "La unidad del movimiento obrero," Sindicalismo, No. 4 (May 16, 1935), 8.

2. Juan Peiró, "Las infamias no edifican", El Combate Sindicalista, No. 13 (November 28, 1935), 4.

3. "Sin Comentario: Para los 'Sindicalistas' de Santiago", Solidaridad (weekly of the Galician Regional, La Coruña), No. 12 (September 14, 1935), 4.

became a kind of "quiet man" until the end of the year. He took no part in any public meetings on behalf of the Alianza Obrera. Only the Juventudes Socialistas maintained a vocal revolutionary stance. But by the end of 1935 and especially in the months after the February 1936 elections the clash between Prietista reformism and the late-flowering revolutionism of Largo Caballero had reinvigorated and sharpened the clash between the two most important leaders of Spanish socialism.

These divergencies within the socialist movement are illustrative of the intricate maze of opinions which run through Spanish working-class politics in the period between October 1934 and the outbreak of the war. In the treintista movement for example the socialists were criticized for in effect keeping one foot in the bourgeois camp and another in the revolutionary one. While the Socialist Party permitted its sections to join Workers' Alliances in the provinces, in Madrid the National Executive of the party and of the UGT refused all offers to join in establishing the Alliance on a national scale. The CNT bid of February 1934 for the UGT to make known its revolutionary aspirations was still unanswered when the Civil War began. After October 1934, complained the syndicalists, "the Socialist Party considered the Workers' Alliances as non-existent"¹

1. Juan López, "En torno a la posición de los socialistas en la Alianza Obrera", Sindicalismo, No. 27 (October 23, 1935),
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The treintistas themselves were no models of consistency. On the one hand they (like the POUM¹) defended the necessity of the Workers' Alliances and sternly condemned those members of it (like the POUM) who sought to convert it into an electoral machine.² Yet Juan Peiró in a series of three remarkable articles on how to act at election time seemed to throw overboard cherished anarcho-syndicalist principles. He said there certainly was a difference between one Government and another, that it was "monstrous" to push the workers into abstention at the polls if a fascist victory were the result. We should not urge them to ballot, he allowed. However (setto voce), "Workers, if you're going to vote, do it against fascism!"³ As for myself, concluded Peiró,

I have said, and I repeat it here, that if an electoral class front should appear against the fascists who now govern us, I, for the first time in my life, would vote⁴

Peiró's position did not dissuade the CNT from its expressed desire for reunion. Solidaridad Obrera maintained

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1. Or, before the POUM was founded in September 1935, the Bloque Obrero y Campesino and the Izquierda Comunista.
 2. See, for example, "Federación Sindicalista Libertaria", Sindicalismo, No. 8 (June 13, 1935), 4.
 3. "El Sindicalismo y el problema político de España", El Combate Sindicalista (now the organ of all the Opposition Syndicates), No. 1 (September 6, 1935), 4.
 4. Ibid., No. 3 (September 20, 1935), 4. The second article of this series may be found in ibid., No. 2 (September 13, 1935), 1.

surprising calm when confronted by a provocative and impatient Opposition manifesto in September. The statement said the treintistas would not return to the CNT until the causes for their withdrawal had been rectified, and publicly. Such recantation being most unlikely, they added, only a miracle could bring about union. The time is come to rid ourselves of the remnants of our respect for the CNT and go off in search of more members for our own ranks.¹ "Soli" was naturally critical but did not lash out with the raking fire of former times,² and a few weeks later the National Committee of the Opposition Syndicates explained away its peevishness.

This mutual forbearance within the CNT was attributable to several causes, the most important of which was of course Asturias. The revolt of October had so jarred the CNT that in its 1934 report the National Committee stated that "now" was the best time to resolve the confederal split:

... To achieve it we must begin by putting aside personal rivalries and hunger for popularity, or all-consuming desires to run the show, evident in many comrades. There must be a place in the C.N.T. for all those who want to see it become greater, even though they may disagree with the majority view which prevails today. There is perfect room in confederal circles for extremists and moderates,

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1. "Manifiesto de nuestro Comité Nacional de Relaciones", El Combate Sindicalista, No. 4 (September 27, 1935), 3-4.
 2. "Comentario obligado a un manifiesto del Comité Nacional de Relaciones de los Sindicatos de Oposición", No. 1085 (October 8, 1935), .

totalitarian anarchists and moderate anarchists Although these various groups have different ideas about the pace of advance of the movement, they all aspire to the implantation of Libertarian Communism; we err if we get into a fight about the speed of approach to the goal, or on small differences of opinion on the various aspects of organization and tactics¹

What a change of language from the days of 1932 and 1933!

The joint sufferings of the last months of 1934 and throughout 1935 brought syndicalists and anarchists into friendly contacts which could not fail to creep up the ladder of confederal opinion. These months were not months when the anarcho-syndicalists carried out strikes and resounding attacks on employers and the government. Barcelona is more peaceful than it has ever been, confessed Jacinto Torryho in July. Only the tramworkers and some members of the Ramo del Agua in the textile industry are keeping up conflicts with the patronal.²

Both wings of the movement were subjected to press censorship but Catalonia felt it more heavily than Valencia. The front page of "Sol" looked more like the Manchester Guardian than the chief organ of a proletarian revolutionary organization. A cartoon showing a barber about to shave his

1. Internal Report... p. 117; ... 117.

2. "De Barcelona: Notas de actualidad", Fructidor (weekly organ of the Rationalist Atheneum and the Libertarian Youth of Menorca, Mahón), No. 11 (July 13, 1935), 1.

client explains the (comparatively) innocuous nature of the CNT press of these days. "What do you think of the new Government?" asks the barber. "Oh, the same," replies the customer, nervously eyeing the poised razor labelled 'Censor', "the same as you think!"¹

Not until April, when 5,000 people attended a pro presos rally in Pamplona, could the CNT hold a public meeting of any size. The National Committee of Workers' Alliances, which was in reality only the Valencian Committee, held a National Conference of Alianzas Obreras in Madrid in the summer but had to do so clandestinely. Finally, on August 18, the Workers' Alliance was able to undertake a large open assembly. Forty thousand people gathered in the Valencian bull ring to hear Juan López again urge the CNT to join the Alliance.

A common detestation of the Lerroux-CEDA Governments which bickered their way through the summer of 1935 also brought the disparate elements within the CNT more closely together. In fact, "Down with fascism!" and "Remember Asturias!" became the watchwords of all Spanish revolutionary organizations during this period in spite of their varying interpretations of the best way to combat the enemy. For example, a feeler put out by the so-called Sindicat Regional de Llum i Força in Catalonia for a united front against the employers in that

1. Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1124 (November 22, 1935), 1.

industry brought a prompt refusal from the CNT gas and electrical workers' union. If you want a united front, said the anarcho-syndicalists, join the CNT.¹ At the same time of course the CNT criticized the socialists for wanting to monopolise the leadership of the entire labor movement for themselves.

During the autumn of 1935, the decline in the cohesiveness of the rightist coalition became as apparent as the corresponding rise in popular esteem of the Left parties. The Government crisis of September seemed to bring Gil Robles closer to the achievement of total hegemony over the Right. In October he rid himself of a possibly obstreperous Minister of the Interior in his apparently uncheckable advance to power. Then came the disclosure of the straperlo scandals, which practically ruined the Radicals, who were in breakup as the year ended. Samper, Portela Valladares, Lerroux, Joaquín Chapaprieta: the heads had rolled. But Alcalá Zamora would not give Gil Robles his chance. Pushing ahead all year and at the very gates of the Government, Gil Robles had them

1. "El Sindicato Unico de Luz y Fuerza de Cataluña responde a la invitación de unidad formulada por el 'Sindicat Regional de Llum i Força'," Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1056 (September 3, 1935), 4.

slammed shut in his face. In December¹ Portela Valladares, the Left Center minister dumped by the CEDA leader in October, ironically became the Prime Minister to call for the February 1936 elections which were to swamp the Right.

While these parliamentary maneuvers went on in Madrid the CNT intensified its campaign for a legalized life and in October and November anarcho-syndicalist unions began emerging from the caverns of underground activity. In Andalusia, Levante and a good part of Castile CNT syndicates were again permitted to function openly. In Guipúzcoa the anarcho-syndicalists even held a comarcal pleno. But in Catalonia it was the same old song: no public meetings, no open union halls.

With the formation of the bridge Government in December and the order (January 7) for the dissolution of the Cortes the opportunity for a less abnormal existence, at least until the elections were over, allowed the CNT to speak its mind more frankly. At an assembly in the Olympia Theater in Barcelona, Vicente Pérez ("Combina") said that the CNT had not died and as proof declared that in Catalonia, in spite of the enforced clandestinity, the CNT reckoned on over

1. From the formation of the Lerroux Government of October 4, 1934, until the dissolution of the Cortes in January 1936, Spain had five Governments and 60 ministers. Forty of them were rightists, mainly members of Acción Popular, while nearly all the rest were Radicals.

40,000 members who still paid confederal dues.¹ And, added "Soli":

We have no doubt that within a few weeks our organization will be flourishing as anarcho-syndicalism has flourished in other times in Catalonia. Now we will begin to hold public acts, meetings and talks and have speeches Everything that our enemies have destroyed we must rebuild

It is essential, as a matter of common sense, for us to secure the confidence of the workers and to attract those comrades who have left us because of the governmental repression and the internal fights we have gone through.²

It was in Levante that the first concrete moves were taken toward healing the breach and restoring the concord which both sides now realized was the only tenable basis for an effective resurgence of the CNT. On December 21 and 22 a Congress of Opposition Syndicates of Valencia was held and Juan López was named secretary of the Regional Committee of the Opposition Syndicates of Levante.

... This Regional Committee was composed of comrades the majority of whom supported C.N.T. unity and so it was possible to take advantage of the first opportunity that came along for harvesting positive results from the campaign for unity. In January of 1936 we received an invitation from the Regional Committee of the C.N.T. of Levante, which resided in Alcoy, for our Syndicates to attend a regional plenum of the C.N.T. of Levante. We urgently called a regional plenum [January 26]

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1. "El emocionante acto del domingo en el teatro Olympia" Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1151 (December 24, 1935), 1.
 2. "La concordia, como base de una reorganización sólida", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1151 (December 24, 1935), 1.

... to take a decision and decided here to attend the C.N.T. plenum with a collective delegation of five: Sigrifido Catalá, Domingo Martínez, Francisco Gómez, [Francisco] López y Figueras. That plenum [February 8] was a decisive step toward the unity of the C.N.T. The result was magnificent and it produced a psychological effect which made for unity. The unification of our syndicates was accepted subject to the agreement of a Confederal Congress.¹ The Levante Regional ... had taken a firm step But the other Opposition Syndicates, in Catalonia and Huelva, still lacked such an agreement. The National Committee of the Opposition Syndicates had its seat in Mataró, with Manuel Mascarell as Secretary. It was not very hard to convince them of the importance of the Levante plenum and it was agreed to call a National Conference of the Opposition Syndicates in Valencia²

But before noticing the Valencia conference, which took place in March, we must first study the events which were occurring elsewhere. On December 18 Largo Caballero resigned as President of the Socialist Party. The Prietista and Besteiro socialists controlled the Socialist Party National Executive meeting of that month and voted to rebuild the leftist block with the republican bourgeois parties with a view toward the coming elections. They brushed off the Alianza Obrera with the following brief resolution:

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1. The basis of the readmission of the Opposition Syndicates in Levante was their "observation and acceptance of the agreements of the Congresses, principles and tactics of the C.N.T." "El Pleno de Sindicatos Levantinos", ibid. (No. 1194, February 12, 1956), 1.
 2. López, "Recordatorio", ibid., p. 23.

WORKERS' ALLIANCES:

It is agreed that where they are already set up and functioning they can continue until the next Party Congress thoroughly settles the entire problem.¹

The Socialist Party took a referendum in December on the electoral pact with the left republicans and working-class parties. Of 1400 groups in the party only seven voted against it. The coalition was approved by the Executive of the Socialist Party, by the Socialist Youth, the UGT and the Communist Party. In a rare and not entirely selfless gesture of brotherhood, El Socialista (the moderate socialist paper) beckoned the CNT to join in. But the CNT now began its trek of ambiguity through the next two months.

The CNT attacked the electoral pact and said it was still waiting for the UGT to reply to its overture of February 1934.² In other words, the anarcho-syndicalists were well disposed to a revolutionary alliance with the UGT but they would countenance no contact with the socialist or republican parties. The treintistas heralded the more conciliatory attitude of the CNT toward the Alianza Obrera but thought it completely utopian to limit co-operation to the UGT and not

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1. "Las Alianzas Obreras", La Batalla, No. 232 (January 3, 1936), 4.
 2. "De periódico a periódico: Contestación cordial a 'El Socialista'", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1154 (December 27, 1935), 1.

include the Socialist Party, because the UGT in any event could do nothing without Socialist Party approval.¹ But the CNT would not budge.

On January 15, 1936, the program of the Frente Popular was signed by representatives of the following organizations: Izquierda Republicana, Unión Republicana, Socialist Party, UGT (Largo Caballero), the Communist Party, the Socialist Youth, the Syndicalist Party (Pestana) and the POUM (Juan Andrade).² The Popular Front was clearly a highly limited affair, for election purposes only. It was thoroughly republican: no nationalization of land or of the Bank, no unemployment compensation or provision for workers' control measures. "Me parece", said Miguel Maura of the agreement, "que no puede ser más moderado de lo que es." "The program set forth in this document is not designed to frighten", declared Prime Minister Portela.³ About all the socialists and the UGT got from it was a promise of amnesty for the thousands of jailed working men. But that was enough.

1. "El llamamiento de 'El Socialista' a la C.N.T.", El Combate Sindicalista, No. 18 (January 2, 1936), 4.

2. The entire text of the Popular Front program may be found in Toranzo, La Independencia de España, pp. 299-308.

3. Ibid., p. 123.

Now anarcho-syndicalist union assemblies began urging the CNT to make a public proposal to the UGT for a revolutionary alliance which would exclude all collaboration with the political parties. The Barcelona building workers passed such a resolution on January 19 and the members of Espectáculos Públicos and the Barcelona affiliates of the FNIF followed suit. Throughout Catalonia this pattern of pressure was repeated until the Catalan CNT was forced to take a definite stand on January 25. On this day a Regional Conference opened in the Meridiana Theater in Barcelona. This conference had been convened to decide the two living issues: What was to be the attitude of the CNT on collaboration with other working-class organizations? and, what should be CNT policy toward the coming elections?

The majority of the delegations brought no mandate from their syndicates because most of them were still closed and the shut-down was not lifted until the meeting began.¹ Here is the resolution on Revolutionary Alliances passed by this conference:

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1. See Solidaridad Obrera, Nos. 1180-84 (January 26-31, 1936) for the minutes and resolutions of this conference. It was attended by 142 delegates representing 92 syndicates, 8 local and 7 comarcal federations, the National Committee and the Regional Pro Presos Committee.

... The Organization of Catalonia ... accepts in principle a project for a pact with the Unión General de Trabajadores from the exclusively revolutionary point of view. The fundamental bases for the projected pact are the following:

First: Recognition by the U.G.T. that only by revolutionary action is the emancipation of the workers possible. It is taken for granted that if this pact is accepted, it must break all political and parliamentary collaboration with the bourgeois regime.

Second: For the social revolution to be effective, the present social regime which regulates the economic and political life of Spain must be completely destroyed.

Third: The new way of life born of the triumph of the revolution will be regulated by the express will of the workers met publicly with complete and absolute freedom of expression for all.

Fourth: The unity of all efforts for the defense of the new social regime is imperative. We must do away with the private interests of every tendency.¹

The delegates also called on the CNT to hold a national conference as soon as possible in order to discuss the pact with the UGT.

Did the CNT genuinely want a revolutionary alliance with the UGT? It seems very doubtful in view of its proviso that the socialist trade unions must sever "all political and parliamentary collaboration with the bourgeois regime", a condition made only a few days after Largo Caballero had

1. "Un Acuerdo de Trascendencia Histórica", Ibid., No. 1181 (January 28, 1936), 1.

signed the Popular Front agreement. True, Largo Caballero was not at all prepared to see socialists take cabinet posts but neither did he appear ready for that annihilation of the republican form of government which the CNT resolution implied. The CNT seemed to be indulging in what Americans call "grand-standing for the fans". The Catalan Confederation was demanding really that the UGT workers become converts to the anarcho-syndicalist faith. It was most unlikely that the socialist trade-unionists would be deeply stirred by such a prospect.

On the second point of the conference agenda, the elections, the debate was much more fiery. Some delegates alleged that the Regional Committee was attempting to seduce the movement into a temporizing attitude on the elections. The conference finally ratified an abstentionist resolution of the plenum of May 1935. But the 1935 plenum had counselled propaganda free from "pernicious demagoguery". Whether or not it was a far, far better thing the CNT did then, and reaffirmed in January 1936, certainly it was a far, far different thing than the anarcho-syndicalists had done in the weeks before November 1933, when they carried out one of the most intensive abstentionist campaigns ever known. For now the CNT refused to exhort its followers to stay home from the polls. The leaders of the CNT knew that a thorough-going anti-electoral drive would mean the confederal masses would not vote. "But the leaders wanted them to vote", and

even the relatively mild resolution of the January plenum, limiting propaganda to exposition of principles and doctrine, was purely "symbolic, para salvar las apariencias."¹

Federico Urales himself had just declared that the CNT must speak neither well nor ill of the elections for to do so might wrest away votes from the Left. Said Urales:

I would consider it a great error on the part of the anarchists if, as a consequence of their action during the electoral period, the rightists triumphed over the leftists.²

Juan Peiró might have chuckled.

As soon as the Catalan Regional Conference was over a Peninsular Plenum of the FAI began in Barcelona. It took place on January 30 and February 1. The anarchists "deplored the fact that workers' organizations which fixed a frankly revolutionary and proletarian route in October 1934 are allied to the bourgeois democratic parties in an attempt to find a solution where there is none."³ The faístas ratified the electoral position of the Catalan Conference and added that "the F.A.I. has nothing ... to rectify in its

1. José Peirats, in an interview with the writer, September 11, 1952, Toulouse.
2. "Tribuna Libre: Ante las próximas luchas políticas", Revista Blanca, XIV, No. 363 (January 3, 1936), 123.
3. F.A.I. Memoria del Pleno Peninsular Celebrado el día 30 de enero y 1 de febrero de 1936 (Barcelona: Gráfica Rey, 1936), p. 18.

complete abstention from all direct and indirect collaboration with the policy of the State."¹ The FAI too was keeping up appearances.

The parties of the Left, said one of the outstanding figures of the FAI, showed no appreciation of the crucial weight of the CNT, but the rightists did. So anxious were they to encourage the CNT to a rousing abstentionist campaign that in Cadiz they even offered Vicente Ballester half a million pesetas to undertake one.²

During these last days of January and the first two weeks of February 1936 the CNT boomed to the surface all over Spain with meetings protesting against fascism, against the death penalty (restored in October 1934) and the Ley de Vagos y Maleantes, and in favor of the revolutionary union of the UGT and the CNT and--of course--of amnesty for the prisoners. But there were no antielectoral campaigns. The words "Don't vote!" and "Abstention!" were not to be found in pre-election manifestos. "Durruti", said Santillán, was not given to subtleties and he, as did some others, began openly to advise attendance at the polls."³

1. F.A.I. Memoria del Pleno Peninsular Celebrado el día 30 de enero y 1 de febrero de 1936 (Barcelona: Gráfica Rey, 1936), p. 18.

2. Diego Abad de Santillán, Por Qué Perdimos la Guerra: Una Contribución a la Historia de la Tragedia Española (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Iman, 1940), p. 36.

3. Ibid., p. 37.

On February 10 the Popular Front held simultaneous rallies in six different places in Madrid. The speakers were Azana, Martínez Barrio, Maurín, José Díaz (secretary general of the Communist Party¹), Pestana² and, naturally, Largo Caballero. With one succinct statement the UGT leader explained the real meaning of the February elections:

... It must be kept in mind that the struggle of the 16th is not the social revolution, but to conquer fascism. It is the struggle between the Republic and the anti-revolutionaries. It is the struggle for amnesty, our main objective of the hour.³

B. The Popular Front to the Civil War

On February 16, 1936, the people of Spain voted and it is fair to say, as both Largo Caballero and the anarcho-syndicalists contended, that the people voted neither on persons or parties but on a problem: the "main objective of the hour", amnesty. The wheel of Asturias had turned full circle. The Popular Front came sweeping in with over four million votes, about half the total cast. It is difficult, for a number of reasons, to calculate how many members of the

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1. For the development of the Popular Front policy of the Communist Party from October 1934 to June 1936, see José Díaz, Nuestra Bandera del Frente Popular, Madrid, Ediciones Europa-América, July, 1936.
 2. Both Pestana and Benito Pavón were elected in February as Syndicalist Party deputies in the Cortes.
 3. "El Acto del Frente Popular en Madrid", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1193 (February 11, 1936), 5.

CNT went to the polls. Manuel Aznar put the figure at "approximately one million".¹ It is in any case evident that the National Confederation of Labor turned the tide. The "sound instinct of the popular masses" responded to avoidance of another November 1933 campaign. "On other occasions they would have been able to get the same results by abstention; this time participation in the elections was advisable," said Santillán. "We gave power to the leftists, convinced that under the circumstances they were a lesser evil."² This was not Juan Peiró talking in 1931; this was the view of a leading faísta in 1936.

On February 19 Portela resigned. Manuel Azaña, who since the summer of 1935 had become the towering figure of Spanish politics, quickly formed a Government. In Oviedo and Gijón the workers did not wait for the Government to act; on the 20th they decreed their own amnesty and opened the jails to release their brothers. In Zaragoza a general strike was called for the immediate liberation of the prisoners. In Madrid, Barcelona and Alicante there were clashes in the streets between working-class groups and rightist extremists. In Burgos the prisoners took over the jail. On the 21st Azaña's amnesty decree was approved and the following day more

1. Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1206 (February 23, 1936); 2.

2. Abad de Santillán, Por Qué Perdimos la Guerra, p. 37.

prisons were emptied. The CNT was not satisfied that the amnesty was broad enough and throughout the spring continued to press the Government to widen it. In late February the Comité Nacional Pro Presos even sent a delegation to interview the Prime Minister on the matter.

In Barcelona the principal attention of the CNT was now turned to the two strikes which had been in progress for many months: urban transport and a section of the textile workers. The Government decreed (February 28) that all workers fired after January 1934 because of their ideas, or as a consequence of political strikes, were to be rehired. But many employers refused to obey the order. The anarcho-syndicalists were not pleased to see their recent sacrifice of principles so poorly rewarded. In a speech in the Grand Price Theater in Barcelona on March 4, the day after Companys and the restored Generalitat Government assumed office, Buenaventura Durruti reminded them that:

We didn't come here to celebrate the arrival of a group of men. We came to tell the men of the Left that we were the ones who decided your triumph and that we are the ones who are maintaining two conflicts which must be solved immediately. It was our generosity that decided the reconquest of April 14.¹

On March 7 the textile dispute was solved and on the 16th the Barcelona urban transport strike, which had begun in

1. "Conflictos del Ramo del Agua y Transporte", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1216 (March 6, 1936), 1-2.

November 1933, was settled. But these solutions were false prophets of the months to come. From now until the war began, Spain was convulsed by a series of strikes, largely joint affairs of the CNT and the UGT but with the anarcho-syndicalists usually making the pace.

Late March saw the Barcelona steel industry paralyzed by strikes in which the UGT steel workers joined the CNT. By the third day nearly 40,000 workers had quit the factories in protest at the refusal of many of the foundry owners to accept the forty-four hour week which had just been re-established (Anguera de Sojo had abolished it in December 1934). Almost ninety steel workers were arrested in the conflict.

On April 17 the CNT swept along UGT workers to a general strike in Madrid, a socialist stronghold, over the objections of both socialist and communist leaders. The strike was a demonstration against some of the attacks of Falange groups there.

The salvo of strikes hammered away with such little respite that even Claridad, Largo Caballero's paper, added its appeal to that of El Socialista for the CNT to change tactics. But the CNT was undeterred. On June 1 in Madrid a strike of building workers began for higher wages and shorter hours. It reached out into the surrounding provinces and was only finally brought to a halt by the start of the war.

Both CNT and UGT members participated in the strike but when the UGT showed signs of willingness to accept government arbitration the CNT cried "Scab!" and lashed the socialist union men as traitors to the cause.

One could list strike after strike which the CNT produced at this time. But the anarcho-syndicalists became very irritated at being blamed for all of them, particularly in Barcelona. Here various groups, none with a claim to working-class support which could begin to rival that of the CNT, attempted in the spring of 1936, to set off strikes in certain industries where the CNT predominated and then to claim credit for being the true champions of the Catalan proletariat. There was reason to believe that the Esquerra had some part in these efforts. It had long been a dream of Macià to have a united Catalan labor organization but it is not surprising that he could never win CNT assent to such a proposal. Yet the Catalan leftists were still chipping away at the idea in 1936.

The main instrument of the Esquerra in its desire to create a Frente Sindical Catalán was the Unió Socialista de Catalunya of Juan Comorera.¹ But on different occasions the

1. In the third week of May the USC sent a message of adhesion to the Third International and agreed to stop collaborating in the Generalitat Government. Immediately after the start of the Civil War, the USC became one of the parties which formed the Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalunya which during the war, under Comorera's leadership, was the most important organ of Communist policy in Catalonia. I am told that Comorera has since recanted and has recently been
(Footnote continued on next page)

POUM, the Socialist Party branch in Catalonia and the UGT added their weight, such as it was, to confront Goliath. The CNT said angrily that since the elections, the Generalitat itself was intervening in labor disputes to propose work contracts to the Consejería del Trabajo and the Jurados Mixtos, and that furthermore the autonomous Government was in some cases supporting the declaration of strikes. The Esquerra had a particular hand, said the CNT, in a strike which commenced in Barcelona on June 18 under the auspices of the main union of private employees, called the CADCI, and a so-called Frente Unico de Trabajadores Mercantiles. The Sindicato Unico Mercantil of the CNT, despite anarcho-syndicalist detestation of these frente unico catch-alls, seconded the strike because it agreed with the announced goals of a forty hour week and increased wages. But the CADCI and the FUTM were less concerned with these economic gains than with winning the introduction of labor carnets and the establishment of a labor exchange. With two such measures they might more effectively try to squeeze the CNT minority out of the commercial trades. The CNT yelled¹ and

(Continuation of footnote from previous page)

seen walking the streets of Barcelona with the blessing of the Franco government. Comorera's chameleon-like political history is but one example of the difficulty of making one's way through the justly described labyrinth of Spanish politics.

1. See, e.g., "Es preciso acabar de una vez con el estado de inquietud creado en los medios obreros por pseudos organizaciones sindicales insolventes e irresponsables", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1310 (June 25, 1936), 8.

when the POUM, with more sound than fury, sought to renew the urban transport strike, the CNT flatly refused any aid.

There was no strike. At a conference in Barcelona on May 2 and 3 the POUM had founded the Federación Obrera de Unidad Sindical, which it claimed represented over 60,000 workers.

Without anarcho-syndicalist support however the young coalition of dissident communists was probably more usefully employed in setting up syndical front organizations than trying to undertake serious labor agitation on its own initiative.

Not only increased union competition but the hamstringing actions of the public authorities troubled the CNT during these months. Government censors under the Popular Front seemed to rip out even bigger chunks of "Sol" than the bienio negro had done. At times the statement that the paper had been checked by a censor before publication was the only sentence to be found on an otherwise blank page. But so floundering were the Popular Front Government that they could not, had they tried, prevent CNT meetings throughout Spain from condemning the censorship and demanding repeal of the Laws of the Eighth of April (which repeated Primo de Rivera's corporative legislation) and Public Order and the Law of Vagrants. When the strike in the building trades began in early June, the government closed CNT syndicates in Madrid and made a number of arrests there as well as detaining the National Committee in Zaragoza. But the

authorities were unable to maintain such firmness. The union halls were opened and the arrested released in a day or two. Later in the same month CNT syndicates in Barcelona were shut and the same thing happened in Cuenca and Salamanca. From May to July there were numerous strikes in Penarroya (Asturias), in the arms factory of Vigo, among agricultural laborers in Avila and in the provinces of Malaga and Cadiz, and general strikes in Valladolid, Sevilla and Huelva. The South of Spain was in fact in much greater ferment than Catalonia and the North during the three months before the war.

While all Spain shook from the wave of successive strikes,¹ the CNT was binding up the confederal wounds. On March 7 the National Committee of the CNT held an interview with some Opposition delegates from Levante and advised them that the National Committee of Relations were invited to attend the coming CNT National Congress. On March 29 and 30 the Opposition Syndicates held their own National Conference in Valencia. The Catalan Opposition Syndicates, because of certain squabbles with the rest of the Opposition movement,²

1. Peirats, *op. cit.*, p. 131, says that from February to the middle of July 1936, there were 113 strikes of an entire industry and 228 partial strikes in Spain.

2. Some of the Catalan Opposition Syndicates, particularly in Sabadell, were flirting with the sprouting separatist labor movement which was discussed earlier. Nothing came of their temporary straying however and all the Catalan dissidents returned to the CNT in May.

did not attend although delegates from Huelva were there. The treintista unions ratified the peace pact signed at the CNT Levante plenum of February,¹ transformed the Regional Opposition Committee of Levante into the National Committee and looked toward Aragon and union.

On May 1, 1936, in Iris Park in Zaragoza, the National Confederation of Labor opened its Second Extraordinary Congress.² The Congress, which lasted ten days, had a variety of items on its agenda. The delegates, 649 of them representing 982 syndicates with 550,595 members,³ analyzed the risings of 1932, 1933 and 1934, the feasibility of a revolutionary alliance with the UGT, the agrarian and unemployment problems, the anarcho-syndicalist conception of libertarian communism and the origins and development of the split in the CNT. It had been five grueling, eventful

1. See above, p. 253.

2. The CNT was unable to publish a Memoria of the extensive minutes of this important Congress. They may be found only in Solidaridad Obrera, Nos. 1265-83, May 3-24, 1936.

3. The Opposition Syndicates sent 43 delegates, representing 85 syndicates and 69,621 members. "Los Sindicatos representados ...", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1269 (May 8, 1936), 3.

A. G. Gilabert puts the number of workers represented at the Congress at over 700,000. "El Congreso de la C.N.T.", Liberación (a Barcelona monthly review), No. 10 (June 1936), pp. 306-08. But, when compared with other reports, the official version seems more accurate.

years for the Spanish libertarians and now they were taking stock.

The first days of the Congress were devoted to the Opposition problem. Spokesmen for both sides reviewed its causes and emphasized their desire for final settlement. With only five syndicates holding back, the Congress passed the following recommendation:

1. The Opposition Syndicates cease to be an organization outside the C.N.T. and they give their adherence to its established rules.

2. This agreement signifies the ending of the Opposition problem on the basis of respect for the principles and tactics approved in the Congresses as an expression of the sovereignty of the Syndicates.
...

3. For the fulfilling of these agreements and consequent settlement of differences, we consider the following procedures necessary:

- a. After this Congress is over the regional organisms of the regions concerned will call regional Congresses.

- b. These Congresses must be preceded by fusion meetings in every locality where there are duplicate Syndicates, assemblies called jointly by the respective Juntas for the purpose of naming the Juntas of the Syndicates and delegates to the Local Federation.

- c. While this agreement is being put into effect the press organs of the Opposition Syndicates, so long as they continue, will become C.N.T. organs, subject to its general orientation.

4. The Congress decides that for fulfilling this agreement those Syndicates which have already held their assemblies before coming to the Congress must act within a maximum period of two months;

for those others which have not held meetings the time is three months, without this implying that the obvious material impossibility of doing so will be taken as breaking the agreement.¹

The representative of the former Comité Nacional de Oposición, speaking for the 70,000 returned prodigals, rose to declare that his future remarks in the Congress should be regarded as "purely the voice of the Syndicates of the C.N.T., for from this moment on, there are no longer any Opposition Syndicates." A rousing chorus of "Viva la C.N.T.!" answered his words. Numerically only half as strong as five years earlier but a formidable force still, the CNT was whole again. Bolstered with a new confidence, the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists turned to the framing of the regimen of the libertarian communist world which they knew could not be too far distant.

The CNT had followed the rocky road to reunion to a happy ending. At the same time, in the months after February 16, the Socialist Party was wrenching itself apart with a searing internal struggle.² In a nutshell, Largo

1. Peirats, op. cit., p. 112.

2. For the best discussion of the dispute within the Socialist Party, as well as an interesting commentary on the role of the anarcho-syndicalists and communists at this time, see Manuel, op. cit., pp. 146-71. The author's observations are particularly valuable because based on interviews with leaders of the various organizations.

Caballero had gone revolutionary. He set his face dead against any socialist collaboration with the bourgeois republicans and stretched out his hand to the anarcho-syndicalists for a revolutionary front.¹ His support came largely from the youth organizations of the socialists and the Stalinists, which had merged in April. Against the left socialists were aligned the official leadership of the Socialist Party, with Prieto and the bureaucracy, who were not at all averse to participation in a left republican coalition. In cold logic the choice of the CNT seemed clear.

In May at the Congress of Zaragoza the anarcho-syndicalists voted to propose an alianza revolucionaria² to the UGT (but not to the Socialist Party). The stipulations of the CNT offer were almost identical with the provisions contained in the resolution of the Catalan Regional Conference of January. That is to say, the UGT would have to forego political and parliamentary collaboration and announce for the complete destruction of the social and political regime now ruling in Spain. This was a tall order but agreement on so

1. See, e.g., his statement in "Por qué se propugna la unidad sindical", Boletín de la Unión General de Trabajadores de España, VIII (July?, 1936), p. 173.

2. For the text of this resolution, see "Hacia la alianza revolucionaria", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1279 (May 20, 1936), 8.

extremist a policy did not seem as remote in May as it had in January. Largo Caballero's language had become thoroughly revolutionary as he moved from bull ring to bull ring imparting to frenzied crowds the saving truth of the doctrine of class war.

But Largo Caballero and the CNT were never able to come to terms. The UGT did not, as the Zaragoza resolution had called on it to do, hold a national congress to formulate its own bases for a Revolutionary Workers' Alliance with the CNT. More to the point however in preventing any viable CNT-UGT pact was the fact that the anarcho-syndicalists simply distrusted Largo Caballero's revolutionary pretensions. Mr. Brennan says that Largo Caballero was "at heart a social democrat playing at revolution."¹ Perhaps, then, the anarcho-syndicalist analysis--at least in this respect--was a correct one. Of his speech in the Zaragoza Plaza de Toros at the start of June, Solidaridad Obrera said:

Largo Caballero pleaded for the unity of the proletariat. But he wasn't concrete

There's a little something lacking in the much vaunted solidarity of the working class. The speakers made not the slightest allusion to the arrests and closing of the Syndicates in the capital of the Republic

Largo Caballero does not measure up to events. Some days ago, in a short sketch of the socialist leader, we spoke favorably of him.

1. Op. cit., p. 305.

But today we are obliged to say that the orator of Zaragoza looks to us like the enchufado socialist of yesteryear.¹

Again, then, as in the months before the rising of October, the two chief working-class organizations of Spain, confronted by perils which in other lands would have surely knit proletarian groups together, failed to unshackle their fears of each other and achieve a genuinely revolutionary front. But--and this is the measure of the change in the Spanish political climate between 1934 and 1936--when there came a really large-scale armed attack from the enemy whom at bottom both UGT and CNT hated most, the Right, the socialists and the anarcho-syndicalists were at last able to suppress their differences (for a little while) and make common cause.

This is not the place to dwell on the extraordinary incapacity for government displayed by the republicans in the period from February to July, 1936. The republican leaders, as if to invite civil war, seemed unable to comprehend that the Right was on the warpath and that the orgy of agitation of the left groups was growing, not declining. The Falange, vastly increased in strength since the elections, was carrying on its terroristic attacks. The generals, Sanjurjo, Mola, Franco, Goded and Batet, were plotting the

1. "El Discurso de Largo Caballero en Zaragoza", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1290 (June 2, 1936), 8.

rising of the Army. The Civil Guards were shooting peasants at Yeste. In a few places the socialists and the anarcho-syndicalists were shooting at each other.

And the strikes did not abate. On July 13 the dockers and transport workers of Barcelona struck. On the same day came word that Calvo Sotelo, the leading figure of the Right, had just paid with his life for the assassination of a socialist Assault Guard lieutenant. That night the Director General of Security ordered the closing of CNT and monarchist locals in Madrid. The authorities arrested 185 Falangists on June 15 but Casares Quiroga was too muddled and unsure to take decisive action to prevent what the working-class press had for days been predicting.

In Catalonia the Generalitat Government saw what was coming. A few days before July 19 the CNT and FAI in Barcelona formed a liaison committee with the Generalitat Government. Abad de Santillán, García Oliver, Durruti and José Asens begged Companys and Gobernación for arms and were told there were none to give out. The anarchists promised that if provided with weapons for only a thousand men, although there were many more cenetistas jammed into union halls waiting to be armed, they would prevent the army forces stationed in Barcelona from leaving the barracks. This gesture failing, a group of men led by Juan Yague stole on to the ships in the harbor and made off with some of the guns they found there.

They took them to the headquarters of the Transport Syndicate but were soon obliged to surrender a part of them to the Generalitat forces who surrounded the union hall. The obstinacy of governors loyal to the Republic but unwilling to adopt the only recourse feasibly left to them, supplying arms to the working-class and other antifascist groups, was not confined to Catalonia. But it was here that the proletarian organizations acted most vigorously on their own behalf. By the evening of July 18 the Building Syndicate had become a CNT general headquarters. That night private cars with the letters "C.N.T. - F.A.I." splashed on their sides with whitewash prowled the Ramblas, as if to give clear notice that the CNT did not propose to be deterred from battle by the October-like hesitancy of the Generalitat.

On July 18th the generals rose and the Spanish Civil War began. On July 19th the anarcho-syndicalists and the socialists rose too,¹ and the Spanish Revolution began.

1. For an account of the fighting in Barcelona in the first two days, see Alfonso M. Carrasco, Barcelona con el puño en alto, Barcelona, J. Sanxo, 1936, and De Julio a Julio: Un año de lucha, Barcelona, Ediciones Tierra y Libertad, 1937. The second book, and Peirats, op. cit., pp. 143-58, also give brief descriptions of the events of July 19 and 20 in other parts of Spain, with emphasis on the role of the CNT.

CHAPTER XII

THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

The city of Barcelona in late July and August of 1936 was the scene of a revolution: a social revolution. Without a nod toward Karl Marx the workers of Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia reached out on July 19th, grabbed Society, shook it soundly and stood it on its head. Most of the newspapers outside Spain gave little indication that a real upheaval of the existing social order was in progress. Even a member of the Communist Party in Barcelona (if one could ^{have} been found) would have insisted, straight-faced, to a visiting observer that Spain was simply having a political revolution, with no social content at all. Few indeed were the analysts of the time who looked under the rug (or wanted to) to discover what was much more than a popular rising to put down a generals' pronunciamiento. There has moreover been little attempt since the social explosion of 1936 in Catalonia systematically to describe the initial surging events of this revolution and to trace the steps

of the counter-revolution which set Society on its feet again.¹

The Spanish Civil War can be studied from several different standpoints, each rewarding in its own way.

1. Much the best study in this respect is Dr. Borkenau's The Spanish Cockpit. Henri Rabasseire, Espagne Creuset Politique (Paris: Editions Fustier, n.d.), is very useful but as chaotic in organization as the events it seeks to describe. Peirats' history contains much valuable information.

H.E. Kaminski, Ceux de Barcelone (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1937), and George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia (London: Secker & Warburg, 1951, first published 1938), are admirable on-the-spot accounts. Diego Abad de Santillan's Por Qué Perdimos la Guerra is important as one of the few accounts made by an outstanding anarchist participant in the events.

Felix Morrow's Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1938) presents a Trotskyist version. The author is well-informed and, when the Marxist jargon is stripped away, the book contains some interesting details. John Langdon-Davies, Behind the Spanish Barricades (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1936) contains useful observations on the first few months of the war.

Frank Jellinek, The Civil War in Spain (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938) gives a communist (orthodox) interpretation but surprisingly shows less propensity to outright falsification of facts than communist studies have normally done. This is for example the book by Jesús Hernández, the communist Minister of the Republic in 1936 and later: Negro y rojo: Los anarquistas en la Revolución española (Mexico City: La España Contemporánea 1946). The anarchist who loaned it the writer said it had made him so ill he had not been able to finish it. He had a point.

The internal strife which divided Spain for three and a half years is like a prism refracting light in many directions. The war can be viewed as the first campaign of the Second World War, the opening engagement against the fascist powers. It can be regarded as a battle-ground of conflicting revolutionary ideologies, or as a case-study in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. It can be analyzed as well by emphasizing the internal situation in Spain: a war which was the tragic consequence of modern Spain's failure to cope effectively with the issues of land reform, social injustice, Church-State relations and regional antagonisms.

Among the most interesting features of the Spanish Civil War were these crowded first nine months between July 1936 and May 1937. This short span of time embraced the period during part of which the revolutionary workers ran the show, gave the instructions and created a demonstrably different social order over a sizeable area of a Western European country. It was also during this stage of the war that the impulse to revolution declined and was finally thwarted. To give some understanding of the pattern of this social revolution will be one of the principal goals of the remainder of this study of

the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Spain, for the CNT and the FAI were by all odds the most important forces behind the revolution.

Our second chief concern will be to account for the fact that the war produced four anarcho-syndicalist cabinet ministers. The CNT and the FAI, organizations steeped in the traditions of revolutionary anarchism and syndicalism, organizations committed to belief in direct action, sent their representatives into the Governments of the Catalan Generalitat and the Madrid Republic. How did this happen ?

The final part of the study will center on the largely successful attempts to strangle the impulse toward social revolution and "to undo those things which ought not to have been done."

Our treatment of the CNT during the Spanish Civil War will extend to May 1937, when the CNT left the Republican Government and the drive toward social revolution could be taken as spent. It will also largely be limited to Catalonia because it was in Catalonia, with some exceptions, that the social revolution achieved its maximum intensity.

A. The Comité Central de Milicias Antifascistas

On July 19th, 1936, CNT-FAI forces poured into the streets to fight against the military rising in Barcelona. By July 20th the anarcho-syndicalists were masters of the city. They had, with the help of the Assault and Civil Guards, put down the revolt and ransacked the garrisons for arms. The only real center of rebel resistance, the barracks of Atarazanas, was finally conquered in a battle marked by the death of Durruti's inseparable companion, Francisco Ascaso.

Elsewhere in Catalonia the CNT and FAI suddenly found themselves with all power in their hands. Upon the Catalan confederal organization was thrust the decision, and the CNT leaders saw but two alternatives: anarchist dictatorship or cooperation with the existing but impotent government. It was a crucial moment. Had the anarcho-syndicalists abolished the apparatus of the Generalitat, they might have been able, in the following months, to defend their revolution with much greater effectiveness. That smashing the state machine in Catalonia would in any permanent way have altered the outcome of the war there is no reason to believe. Too many other factors beyond anarcho-syndicalist control twisted the revolutionary comet off its course.

Unshaved, dirty with smoke and dust, shirtless, armed with rifles and pistols, García Oliver and two companions went to the Palace of the Generalitat to see Luis Companys. Seated, with their rifles between their legs, they heard him say:

First of all I must tell you that the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. have never been treated as their real importance deserved. You have always been harshly persecuted, and I, to my sorrow but forced by political realities, who was with you before, was later obliged to oppose and persecute you. Today you are the masters of the city and of Catalonia because you alone have conquered the fascist militarists, and I hope that you will not be offended if at this moment I remind you that you did not lack the help of the few or many loyal men of my party and of the guards andmozos.

Companys thought a moment [said García Oliver] and then continued slowly: But the truth is that persecuted severely until day before yesterday, today you have defeated the military and the fascists. I cannot, then, knowing who and what you are, speak to you other than with great sincerity. You have won and everything is in your power; if you do not need me or want me as President of Catalonia, tell me now and I will become one more soldier in the fight against fascism. If, on the other hand, you think that in this post which I would have left only if dead had fascism won, I can with the men of my party, my name and my prestige, be useful in this struggle....you can count on me and my loyalty as a man and a politician who is convinced that today an entire past is dying of shame, and who sincerely wants Catalonia to be at the head of the most socially advanced countries. ¹

1. Juan García Oliver, "El Comité Central de las Milicias Anti-fascistas de Cataluña", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1644 (July 18, 1937), 4.

The anarchist¹ consented to Companys' suggestion to attend a meeting in another room where he had gathered representatives of all the anti-fascist organizations. There the Esquerra leader proposed a Comité de Milicias to conduct the military operations against the rebels in Zaragoza and to control the home front in Catalonia. The anarcho-syndicalists made their choice on that day. Said Garcia Oliver:

The C.N.T. and the F.A.I. decided¹ on collaboration and democracy, renouncing the revolutionary totalitarianism which would lead to the strangulation of the Revolution by confederal and anarchist dictatorship. They trusted in the word and person of a Catalan democrat and they kept and supported Companys in the Presidency of the Generalitat; they accepted the Militias Committee and they established a proportional representation of forces to compose it which although not fair--the U.G.T. and the Socialist Party, in a minority in Catalonia, were assigned posts equal to the C.N.T. and triumphant anarchism--was intended to be a sacrifice for the purpose of leading the parties, dictatorial by nature, to collaborate loyally with us and not engage in a suicidal competition,² which could upset the efforts of us all.

The Comité de Milicias Antifascistas de Cataluna was immediately formed, with three representatives of

1. "A little too fast, if you ask me", said one prominent anarchist writer, voicing a common (hindsight) anarchist complaint. Gaston Leval, Né Franco Ne Stalin: le collettività anarchiche spagnole nella lotta contro Franco e la reazione staliniana (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Italiano 1952), p.77.

2. "El Comité Central de las Milicias Anti-fascistas...", loc. cit.

the CNT (Durruti, García Oliver and José Asens), two of the FAI (Santillán and Aurelio Fernández), four from the Esquerra and Unión Republicana, three from the UGT and one each from the newly-formed Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña,¹ and the POUM.

On July 21 a Regional Plenum of Local Federations and Comarcal Committees analyzed the situation and unanimously decided not to talk about libertarian communism until that part of Spain which had fallen to the rebels had been conquered. The meeting thus ratified the decision to cooperate with other union organizations and political parties in the Committee of Militias. Only the comarca of Bajo Llobregat voted no to such collaboration.

The Committee of Militias, which was in fact under the hegemony of the anarcho-syndicalists, quickly installed itself in a new building formerly occupied by the Nautical School and published the following order "obligatory for all citizens" and directed toward controlling the home front and recruiting militias:

1. See below, p. 381-82.

1. A revolutionary order is established and all the organizations on the Committee promise to maintain it.

2. For control and vigilance the Committee has named the teams necessary to see that all the orders it sends out are rigorously obeyed. For this purpose the teams will carry the proper credentials.

3. These teams will be the only ones accredited by the Committee. Anyone who tries to act outside them will be treated as a rebel and will suffer the sanctions which the Committee may decide on.

4. The night teams will act rigorously against those who disturb the revolutionary order.

5. From one to five o'clock in the morning circulation will be limited to the following elements:

a) To all those authorized to belong to any of the organizations which compose the Militias Committee.

b) To persons who are accompanied by any of the above elements and who can prove that they are trustworthy.

c) To those who can justify the case of force majeure which makes it necessary for them to be out.

6. For the purpose of recruitment for the Anti-fascist Militias, the organizations which constitute the Committee are authorized to open their respective recruitment and training centers. The conditions of this recruitment will be detailed in a later ruling.

7. The Committee hopes that, given the necessity of establishing a revolutionary order so as to be able to confront the fascist nuclei (among us), it will not be forced, in order to insure obedience to it, to recur to disciplinary measures.¹

1. Abad de Santillán, Por Qué Perdimos La Guerra, pp. 59-60.

The Militias Committee divided its work by giving Jaime Miravittles (Esquerra) the post of secretary and establishing a number of subcommittees. The most important of these was the War Committee, headed by García Oliver and composed of eight members: three officers of the Republican Army, the Minister of War of the Generalitat, (Commander Díaz Sandino) and three representatives of the UGT, the Esquerra and the POUM. The War Committee had two committees of its own, Health and Food Supplies, both serving the needs of the militias and the civilian population of Catalonia. There was also a Committee of Investigation, a political police organ under which a Comité de Patrullas de Control operated, both organs practically replacing the former municipal police of Barcelona.¹

This Investigation Committee was charged with purifying the new Catalonia of fascist elements. It dealt with political cases while leaving "criminal" cases to the city police. When Kaminski visited the headquarters of Investigación, accompanied by the famous anarchist Emma Goldman, he was astonished to discover that the department limited its functions to "discovery of the

1. "Le rôle du Comité Central des Milices Antifascistes", La Révolution Espagnole (POUM weekly, Barcelona), No. 2 (September 10, 1936), 3-4.

enemies of the Revolution", handing them over for punishment to the popular courts which had been set up.¹

Borkenau nonetheless speaks of the Investigation Committee as having been "terrible in repressing all enemies of the revolution..."²

The Patrullas de Control were by November an organization of 1,500 men operating day and night in Barcelona to guarantee revolutionary order. The Control Patrols were divided into eleven sections on each of which the CNT had the most members and which were under the direction of one Comite Central de Patrullas. The patrols were not only to ferret out "fascist" elements but were to prevent any other activity which might be counter-revolutionary, such as looting or indiscriminate killing. The anarchists did not keep for themselves the treasure they did get their hands on, as Borkenau testifies.³ Near the end of July, for example, over sixteen million pesetas found in the Episcopal Palace in the town of Vich were handed over to the Militias Committee. At the same time many churches were set ablaze, in acts symbolic of the destruction of the old order of things.

With respect to anarchist terrorism there seems to be no doubt that the workers killed a number of factory-owners

1. Kaminski, op. cit., 233-36.

2. The Spanish Cockpit, p.182.

3. Ibid., pp.73-74.

and heads of large companies but the evidence which does exist on just how many persons were "eliminated" is contradictory.¹ After the first vengeful scything down

1. According to Borkenau, "terrorism in town and village was by far the most important lever of social revolution. Executions preceded expropriations, and fear of executions bullied the remaining rich into submission to the revolutionary regime." *Ibid.*, p.251. Jellinek (*op. cit.*, p.447) on the other hand complains that "the chief disadvantage of the movement in Barcelona was that there was no reign of terror" !

Another writer contends that the workers' groups carried out their executions with the help of lists prepared in advance; that a central morgue was established to receive the bodies of persons slain; and that the exact figures for the toll of the executions could thus be seen. By September 9 says this authority, the number of executions had passed 6,000, of which 511 had been committed during the first two days of fighting, leaving an average of 100 executions a day, the number previously fixed by the committee in charge. Clara Campoamor, La Revolution Espagnole Vue Par Une Republicaine (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1937), p.137.

Borkenau however (*ibid.*, pp.253-54) says that the terrorism of the first three months was decentralized mass terrorism in contrast to that which would have been undertaken by an organized police force or an "improvised central organization". Professor E. Allison Peers, who is certainly critical of the terrorist wave of July, August and September, nonetheless expresses his skepticism about Campoamor's detailed statistics. Catalonia Infelix (London: Methuen, 1937), p.260.

Langdon-Davies (*op. cit.*, p.154) states that a visit to the city morgue in Barcelona convinced him that the terror in Barcelona had in the thirty-five days after July 19th produced "perhaps 200 murders in over a month, not 2,000 or so..." Yet another writer estimates that "after the revolution" 25,000 persons were shot or assassinated in Catalonia. Jean Raynaud, En Espagne "Rouge" (Paris: Editions du Cerf, September 1937) p.67.

In view of such evidence it is probably best to conclude that the revolutionary terror was a mass movement directed against those persons who by reason of their situation in life were regarded as enemies of the working-class, and that the terror brought death to a very large number of people. See Brennan, *op. cit.*, pp.318-19, 323.

of employers and others who by virtue of their station were ranked among the "enemies" of the revolution from times past, the CNT and FAI ceased tolerating the constant arrests and shootings often made in the name, but without the authority, of the anarcho-syndicalist organizations. Posters and articles in the press warned that only the Committee of Investigation or the Chief of Police could authorize inspections of private houses. "We are", said the FAI, in an historically inaccurate but very business-like statement, "enemies of all violence, of all imposition".

...All blood not shed by the people in their great determination for justice repels us. But we declare, coolly, with terrible serenity and with the unbending intention to do what we say, that if all these acts of irresponsibility which are spreading terror through Barcelona are not stopped, WE WILL PROCEED TO SHOOT EVERY INDIVIDUAL who is proved to have committed acts against human rights....For the honor of the people of Barcelona, for the dignity of the C.N.T. and of the F.A.I. these excesses must be stopped. And we will stop them.

B. Revolutionary Justice.

A good example of the operation of this curious phenomenon of the dual powers in Catalonia, the Militias

1. "F.A.I.: Saliendo al paso de algo que hay que terminar.", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1339 (July 30, 1936), 8. But it was not until "the end of the year", says Brenan (op. cit., pp. 318-319) that "unauthorized 'eliminations' had practically ceased to occur".

Committee and the Generalitat, was the system of revolutionary justice developed in July and August. The working-class organizations carried out their expropriations and formed their workers' control committees in factories throughout Catalonia in almost spontaneous fashion, with no central direction involved. But the effective decision-making nerve center for the exercise of political power lay in Barcelona, with the Committee of Militias. The Generalitat, feeble and drained of most semblance of strength, could only issue decrees placing the seal of legality on faits accomplis in the street.¹ This rubber-stamp process is very clearly seen in the early development of the court system spawned by the revolution.

Angel Samblancat, a lawyer with close ties to the CNT, gives one account of the genesis of the revolutionary courts. CNT militiamen under Samblancat's guidance invaded, with Militias Committee approval, and occupied, on the pretext of searching for arms, the Palace of Justice which was then under heavy Civil Guard watch ("donde pululaban mas tricorneos que de costumbre").² Samblancat

1. For a useful compendium of these Generalitat decrees in the early months, see J.G. Martin, Political and Social Changes in Catalonia during the Revolution (July 19th - December 31st 1936), edited by the Generalitat de Catalunya, n.d.

2. Peirats, La C.N.T. en la Revolución Española, vol. II (Toulouse: Ediciones C.N.T., 1952), pp. 106-11.

and two delegates from the CNT then formed a Comité Superior de Justicia de Cataluña to try those who had given support to the insurrection. Two types of courts stemmed from this organ.

On August 17th the Generalitat decreed the establishment of an Oficina Jurídica with powers to review all cases of a "social character". Eduardo Barriobero, another lawyer sympathetic to the CNT, was brought in from Madrid to replace Samblancat as president of this court when Samblancat became head of the Tribunal Extraordinario which on board the prison-ship Uruguay tried and sentenced to death Generals Goded and Fernández Burriel and other rebel army officers. Normal military law was applied in the trials of these military insurgents. Barriobero's court paid no attention to the limitations of the Generalitat decree although they availed themselves of the title and powers granted in it.¹ By early September this first revolutionary court was reviewing hundreds of cases every day. People

1. For a detailed account of the development of the courts during the early months in Catalonia, see Marian Rubio i Tuduri, Antecedents et Documents 10: La Justice en Catalogne 19 Juillet 1936 - 19 Février 1937 (Paris: Association Hispanophile de France, 1937). It appears Esquerra - inspired.

poured in with denunciations, pressed claims and asked to have past sentences reversed, with the claimant, usually working-class, normally receiving satisfaction.¹

The Judicial Offices' chief work was to advise persons gratis on legal points, to repress usury, to facilitate marriages and divorce and, later, to try minor cases against persons accused of "Fascism". It dealt with 6,000 cases in the eighty days of its existence, working twelve hours a day and seven days a week.²

The court was so busy, said Samblancat, that "I remember one judge who on Sundays for relaxation went to the Aragon front to do some firing. The rest of the week he was chasing fascists in the capital."³

In Barcelona in late August a Special Popular Tribunal to try only crimes of military rebellion was instituted. Kaminski describes one of the sessions of the court which he attended. There was a jury of working-men,

1. Boletín de Información CNT AIZ FAI (the daily type-script mimeographed anarcho-syndicalist bulletin published in Barcelona), No. 46 (September 9th, 1936), 2. This Boletín is an important source for the CNT-FAI view-point on day by day developments during the war. It was also published, although less frequently, in English, French and German editions.

2. Jellinek, op. cit., p.450.

3. Peirats, op. cit., vol. II, p.109.

who freely asked questions of the military officers on trial and of the witnesses and then laid down four sentences of death.¹ The tribunal was bound by no juridical rules of procedure and did not base judgments on legislated codes. Sentences were strict and immediate and there was no appeal, but Angel Ossorio y Gallardo, who as a Roman Catholic cannot be fairly accused of being an anarchist, said of the popular tribunals of these early months that they "respected the rights of those on trial to the point of exaggeration and that military traitors were nobly defended by republican lawyers and even anarchists".² Ossorio was referring generally to the Barcelona Popular Tribunal and the other popular tribunals similar to the central one in Barcelona which were established in the provinces of Catalonia to deal with acts of rebellion by disloyal military officers. One judge and a jury of twelve, "of revolutionary origin", made up these courts, which were legalized by Generalitat decree (August 24).

1. Kaminski, op. cit., pp. 130-34.

2. Angel Ossorio, Vida y Sacrificio de Companys (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1943), p.246.

In October seven Popular Tribunals were created (four in Barcelona, one each in Tarragona, Gerona and Lerida) with jurisdiction over counter-revolutionary political as well as military acts. Each of these courts had a president, named by the Councillor of Justice, and one representative from each of the Loyalist organizations.¹ "The members of the jury", said Andrés Nin, who in September became Generalitat Councillor of Justice, "decide exclusively according to their revolutionary conscience".² It should be pointed out nonetheless that the terms of the decree required the courts to "apply existing legal precepts in a form adapted to the exigencies of the present moment."³

At the same time that the new Popular Tribunals were set up, a Junta de Seguridad Interior, a dependency of the Councillor of Internal Security, Artemio Aiguade of the Esquerra, was established. It was to this Junta that the Investigation Department which had formerly answered to the Militias Committee was now responsible.

1. For the text of the decree establishing these courts see "La creación de los nuevos Tribunales Populares", La Noche (Barcelona), No. 3,412 (October 15, 1936), 6.

2. Kaminski, op. cit., p.127.

3. "La creación de los nuevos Tribunales Populares", loc.cit.

It is necessary to interrupt our account at this point to emphasize a fact which is essential to the understanding of the Spanish Civil War, particularly in Catalonia. The war was marked first by an exercise in revolution. The months following the triumph of the anarcho-syndicalist workers constituted a process of gradual recovery of power by the organs of the state at the expenses of the workers' conquests of the early weeks. To approve or disapprove of this development is not germane here. The point is: this is what happened.

Certainly one instance of this recouping of effective strength by the Generalitat came in these transmutations of the revolutionary courts. By the time (October) the Popular Tribunals responsible to the Councillor of Justice, and the Internal Security Junta accountable to the Esquerra Councillor for Internal Security, had been established, the CNT had already entered the Generalitat Government, a step which we shall discuss later. Anarcho-syndicalist participation in the Government however strengthened the authority of the Generalitat rather than blocked its recovery of power. The Catalan Government had won back control of the law courts by the October move and had taken an important

stride toward removing control of public order from the hands of the CNT. On November 20, moreover, came the dissolution of the revolutionary Juridical Offices of August. Peirats concludes, and of course this is an anarchist interpretation:

As the State rebuilt itself the old and wily civil servants returned to their posts. The Popular Tribunals, although they continued under the same name, were converted into a coarse caricature of what the people had made of them.¹

Leaving to one side Peirats' condemnation of the development, it is clear that the revolutionary role of the courts of August had been gradually superseded by the regular government. The struggle for domination of the organs of public order continued, as we shall see, on into 1937.

C. The Militias.

The most important fact to remember about the anarcho-syndicalists and the Spanish Civil War is of course that they were making war and revolution at the same time. Nowhere is this policy better reflected than in the organization of the militias to fight in Aragon. In

1. Peirats, op. cit., vol. II, p.113.

those first weeks after July 19th the most urgent task of the Militias Committee was to organize armed forces for the Zaragoza front. Four days after the squelching of the revolt in Barcelona, 3,000 volunteers¹ gathered in the Paseo de Gracia and the Diagonal and marched off to Aragon under the leadership of Durruti and Commander Pérez Farras, head of the Generalitat Mozos de Escuadra. Durruti's legendary Column of Victory increased in numbers² before long and the advance of the almost worshipped chieftain to the front was followed by the CNT-FAI press with banner headlines. Within several days after Durruti's departure, over 150,000 volunteers³ had enrolled to join the various militia columns being formed by the different political and trade-union groups. The

1. Abad de Santillan, Por Qué Perdimos la Guerra, p.64.

2. Again, it is difficult to give exact figures for the numbers of militia-men. The anarchists themselves disagree. Rudolph Rucker says: "The workers' militia soon comprised 20,000 men, 13,000 of whom belonged to the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., 2,000 to the Socialist trade unions of the U.G.T., and 3,000 to the parties of the People's Front. Apart from that, Barcelona also equipped an army of 8,000 men, all members of the C.N.T., who, under the command of the Anarchist Durruti, set out for Sargossa...." The Truth About Spain (New York: Freie Arbeiter Stimme, n.d.), p.3.

3. Abad de Santillan, ibid., p.64.

CNT due to its preponderance had the largest militias.

On the first of August the Madrid Government ordered the mobilization of the reserves of 1933 and 1935, and the Generalitat seconded the move. At once Catalonia, or at least the only political power that now mattered in Catalonia, asserted its autonomy. The CNT refused to have anything to do with a uniformed, regular army built along the old hierarchical lines. Ten thousand young men and soldiers met in the Olympia Theatre on August 4th and announced that they now considered themselves freed from the orders of the traditional military regime.

We will go to the militias. To the front as well. But to go to the barracks as before, soldiers submitted to discipline and orders which do not come from the popular forces, No. ¹

Thereupon the Militias Committee declared that the soldiers of these years should return immediately to the barracks and put themselves at the disposition of the militia committees which had been set up under the jurisdiction of the Central Committee.² The Militias

1. Boletín de Información CNT AIT FAI, No. 16 (August 5, 1936), 3.

2. Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1345 (August 6, 1936), 1.

Committee next parceled out the various barracks in the city among the different Loyalist organizations. The Esquerra had Montjuich, the POUM Lepanto, the PSUC the Parque, while the CNT and FAI took over the barracks of Pedralbes and four others. Names began to appear on the barracks which indicated the political organization in charge: Karl Marx, Lenin, Miguel Bakunin, Salyochea. This array of titles was illustrative of the fact that the popular militias owed their primary allegiance to the party or syndical organization which led them and not to any government authority. The bourgeois Esquerra, and the PSUC for reasons which will become clear later, and of course the Madrid Government, would not have wished it so. They all preferred a regular disciplined army ready to answer the call of the state. In Cat^alonia at this time such an army was impossible. The anarcho-syndicalists would not have tolerated it and there was no way to oppose the CNT. The Army forces had lost their arms to the workers after the July rising and many of the soldiers, as well as a large part of the Assault Guards and the Civil Guards, had joined the popular militias.

In order to guarantee control of the newly organized militias and to weed out rebel sympathizers among the various government armed forces, the CNT and the UGT introduced a system of Consejos de Obreros y Soldados. These Councils were first set up in Barcelona and were then formed in Levante, Andalusia and even in Madrid.¹ The purpose of these committees was not to take command in a military sense but to assure that the military officers who were acting as technical advisors would not stray from the political control of the working-class organizations. Alfonso Miguel, a CNT figure who played a leading part in establishing these joint worker-soldier

1. See Comité Central, Consejos de Obreros y Soldados y Demás Cuerpos Similares de España, Memoria de las gestiones realizadas por este Comité Central en Castellón de las Plana, Valencia, Alicante, Murcia, Cartagena y Madrid (Barcelona: Gráfica Rey, 1936).

The Central Committee of the Council of Workers, Soldiers and Other Similar Bodies of Catalonia was composed of four delegates from the CNT and three from the UGT, while in the Committees of each cuerpo or guardia organization, there were two delegates from the CNT and one from the UGT. Boletín de Información CNT AIT FAI, No. 35 (August 27, 1936), 6.

organs, wrote:

...The creation of the Committees was determined by the necessity of continuing the fight and having absolute confidence in the general decisions of the military command.

The workers' militias needed a guaranteed direction. They got it by mixing their own elements with those which, elected by the respective military bodies, had the same goal: "to fight united, under one responsible direction, single and loyal...."¹

Under the control of these Consejos were the committees elected by the men in each barracks and each militia unit. Delegates from every committee would gather to elect the delegate for the centuria and in turn the centuria delegates would elect a representative for their sector. The professional military officers fighting with the militias were thus subject, in case of controversy in any situation calling for a final decision, to the will of the politically affiliated committees. The system of committee control in the militias persisted in Catalonia even after the Madrid Government, at the insistence of the communists and their

1. De Julio a Julio: Un año de lucha (Texto de los trabajos contenidos en el extraordinario de FRAGUA SOCIAL de Valencia del 19 de julio de 1937 (Barcelona: Ediciones Tierra y Libertad, 1937), p.142.

sympathizer, Julio Alvarez del Vayo, introduced the network of political commissars in the Government drive for a centralized disciplined army.¹

The Committee of Antifascist Militias paid the militia men and their families from funds contributed by the syndicates. The Committee made itself responsible for the supplying of the front with arms and food. It formed military training centers such as the Escuela Popular Militar de Milicias Antifascistas, a provisional school which was announced in early September to give brief training for the technical commands of the militias. The instructors at the school were to be controlled by the syndical organizations to insure that there would be no wavering from the spirit of the revolution. Pupils were to be designated by the Loyalist organizations and were to be subject to the control of the Militias Committee.² The Committee attended as well to the transformation of peacetime industries into war factories and maintained relations with the Republican Government.

1. See Luis Araquistáin, El Comunismo y la Guerra de España (Carmaux, Tarn: Imprimerie des Travailleurs Réunis, 1939), p.8.

2. Boletín de Información CNT AIT EAI, No. 44 (September 7, 1936), 1.

The Committee of Militias was a Ministry of War in times of war, a Ministry of Interior and a Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the same time, and it promoted similar organs for economic and cultural matters.¹

The acquisition of arms continued to be a problem for two reasons. Many people who had arms behind the lines refused to hand them over. On the Aragon front there were in those early days but 30,000 rifles and very few machine-guns, while the various parties and organizations retained away from the fighting lines nearly 60,000 rifles and more ammunition than there was at the front.² When Durruti's first expedition advanced into Aragon his men, aside from some rifles and a small number of automatic weapons, had but two pieces of artillery and several trucks which had been covered with armor-plate in very crude fashion.³ Durruti roared with rage every time he came to Barcelona and saw so many weapons openly displayed.

The second cause of the arms shortage was that Madrid would not forward any to the Aragon front,

1. Abad de Santillán, Por Qué Perdimos la Guerra, p.70

2. Ibid., pp.68-69.

3. Umbra, No. 53 (November 19, 1938), 25. This special number commemorating the death of Durruti (November 20, 1936) contains articles on the early organization of the Durruti Column and its subsequent militarization.

predominantly under the control of the CNT and the only sector in which the POUM had any forces to speak of. This boycott became particularly marked after the institution of the Largo Caballero Government of September and the arrival of arms from the Soviet Union in October. There was no question of allowing war material to go to the anarcho-syndicalists in Aragon for this would make even more difficult the task of the Central Government in militarizing the militias. For reasons which we shall elaborate later the Soviet Union was fiercely opposed to the workers' control of Catalonia and the social revolution of the anarcho-syndicalists and therefore earmarked none of this aid for CNT militias.

More graphically than any other writer George Orwell has described the frightful lack of arms and munitions in Aragon. It is he as well who has given the best close-up picture of the militias: reliant on delegations to Barcelona when they needed munitions and supplies, these spontaneously organized "militias had to hold the line while the Popular Army was training in the rear". It is, says Orwell, "a tribute to the strength of 'revolutionary' discipline that the militias stayed in the field at all. For until about June 1937 there was

nothing to keep them there, except class loyalty."¹ He adds that:

...During the first two months of the war it was the Anarchists more than anyone else who had saved the situation, and much later than this the Anarchist militia, in spite of their indiscipline, were notoriously the best fighters among the purely Spanish forces....²

D. The Local Committees

We have now discussed the working of the revolutionary police and court organs for the purification of the home front as well as the functioning of the popular militias. There remains to say something of the committees which assumed control of the local municipal administrations. The economic side of the revolution will be described in the following chapter.

The fact that in the first days of the fighting industries and local government centers in Catalonia were seized by workers who controlled them through a variety of revolutionary committees makes it very difficult to impose a nice systematic pattern on the forms of organization produced by the revolution. But these comités revolucionarios obreros sprang up in factories and towns in some instances

1. Orwell, op. cit., p.28.

even before the creation of the Central Militias Committee and, after its formation, naturally cooperated with it. The revolutionary committees which replaced the municipal administrations arrogated to themselves the economic, military, cultural and policing duties of their predecessors. They were often called, after the central one in Barcelona, Comités de Milicias Antifascistas. When, in October, these CMA's were dissolved, they were replaced by the former Municipio or Consejo Municipal. There were two main types of control committees in Catalonia during 1936 and the first half of 1937, one political and one economic. With the change in political and military events, came, barometer-like, changes in the influence and structure of these various organs.¹

To the anarcho-syndicalists:

...Few organs can have been so expressive of popular and federalist democracy as the local Committees. Their members were elected freely in the workers' assemblies, and the committees represented in local life what the old and authentic Councils of Castile, of such illustrious lineage, did....²

1. José Peirats, in an interview with the writer, September 12, 1952, Toulouse.

2. Lazarillo de Tormes, España, Cuna de la Libertad; La Revolución Española y Sus Conflictos (Valencia: Ediciones "Ebro", 1937), p.53.

When Dr. Borkenau came through Port Bou in the first week of August he found that the local political committee contained "one representative of every pro-Government party existing in the town."

...This composition of the committees on the basis of complete parity between the parties concerned derived from a decree of the Catalan Generalitat, identical in content with a decree of the Madrid Government. It had been religiously obeyed; in consequence, the composition of the committees did not give any indication as to the balance of power between the individual political parties on the spot.¹

Moreover, "in practically every village", said Dr. Borkenau, "there is a political committee, invariably composed on the basis of the regulations of the Generalitat, which prescribes parity of representation for all political organizations and trade unions...."²

It is surprising that Dr. Borkenau could so sweepingly affirm that "practically every village", in obedience to a Generalitat decree, formed municipal committees with equal representation for all Loyalist organizations. In the first place it is to be doubted that within less

1. The Spanish Cockpit, p.68.

2. Ibid., p.94.

than a week after his arrival in Spain, he had been able to visit "practically every village" in Catalonia. In the second place the actions taken by the numerous committees throughout Catalonia did not, in those early days, stem even from the orders of the Militias Committee in Barcelona, much less from the decrees of the powerless Generalitat. Finally, it is not true that most of the village committees were made up of one delegate from each pro-Government organization. It is precisely because this was not the case which makes the pattern of the workers' revolution so difficult to describe accurately.

The local executive committee in Puigcerda, from which Mr. Langdon-Davies received his "passport", was called a Popular Front Committee and contained representatives from the Esquerra, the CNT, and the UGT and the Communist Party.¹ The Comité Local Antifascista of Vich, to take another example, had two representatives of the CNT and one each from the FAI, the Rabassaires, UGT, POUM and the Esquerra.²

1. Langdon-Davies, op. cit., pp.108-109

2. Boletín de Información CNT AIT FAI, No. 15 (August 4 1936) 2.

In Valls, in the comarca of Tarragona, the Militias Committee contained two members of the Esquerra, one each from the POUM, the Unió Socialista de Catalunya and the UGT, and five from the CNT-FAI.¹ The Valls Committee, to cite one instance of the functioning of a local committee, distributed its work into a number of sub-committees: war, seizures (incautaciones), labor, transport, finance and supplies. By late September this committee had expropriated between one hundred fifty and one hundred seventy properties belonging to "rebels and clericals" in the town. The buildings were used to house trade-union and party headquarters, cooperatives, schools and the offices of other working-class subcommittees.²

One could list example after example of the composition of these local revolutionary committees in order to illustrate both the diversity of their make-up and the variety of the functions which they fulfilled in the community. Even where, says Morrow, the new committees gave representation to "all the anti-fascist parties and unions...., the Esquerra and Republican Left politicians

1. Boletín de Información CNT AIT FAI, No. 12 (July 30 1936), 1.

2. Ibid., No. 61 (September 26, 1936), 3-4.

seldom appeared" in them. "They were replaced by workers and peasants who, though still adhering to the republican parties, followed the lead of the more advanced workers who sat with them."¹

There can be no question, in conclusion, that the crazy-quilt of local revolutionary committees placed control of life in the towns and villages of Catalonia largely into the hands of the working-class organizations and in particular into those of the CNT and FAI. It is readily understandable that the displacement of these committees was an important item on the agenda of the non-revolutionary members of the Loyalist coalition in Catalonia.

1. Morrow, op. cit., p.21.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ECONOMIC REVOLUTIONA. Industry

The Spanish Civil War was the occasion for the most extensive attempt yet seen to put into practice the anarcho-syndicalist conception of economic organization.¹ Immediately after the fighting in July was over and in a few instances while it was still in progress, the workers in Barcelona and elsewhere in the region occupied the factories, seized the transport lines and public services and began to operate them. In a few days the control of the industrial economy of Catalonia had passed largely into the hands of the anarcho-syndicalist workers.

1. The most thorough statement of the anarcho-syndicalist program is to be found in Diego Abad de Santillán, El Organismo Económico de la Revolución: Como Vivimos y Como Podríamos Vivir en España (Barcelona: Tierra y Libertad, 1937, 1st ed. 1936). There is a translation: After the Revolution: Economic Reconstruction in Spain Today (New York: Greenberg, 1937).

A widely circulated statement of the anarcho-syndicalist goal may be found in Isaac Puente, El Comunismo Libertario: Sus Posibilidades de Realización en España (Valencia: Biblioteca de "Estudios", 1933). Felipe Aláiz, in a series of seventeen pamphlets of a projected twenty, emphasizes the anarchist conception of a federation of municipalities: Hacia Una Federacion de Autonomías Ibéricas (Bordeaux, Tierra y Libertad, 1945-48).

There were no central directives to guide this drive; it generated from below. Workers' control committees appeared throughout the region but in obedience to no general plan. The lack of any over-all direction means that there was no uniform pattern in the structure and functioning of these worker committees. In brief it can be said that the CNT pushed a policy of collectivizing the large factories and rural estates as well as many of the small factories and, wherever possible, the holdings of the peasants themselves. In late August came the following announcement, labeled "Importantísimo":

In the present circumstances, pregnant with possibilities for economic transformation, the Confederal Organization launches these watchwords which the proletariat should follow to achieve the most necessary and urgent objectives.

All the workers of all industries should proceed immediately to take over the Enterprises and collectivize them. This should be done as fast as possible; then they should at once name a Workers' Council which will manage the industry with the advice of those technical experts which may be needed.

The variety of forms of control makes it most unwise however to lay down any general lines as descriptive

1. Boletín de Información CNT AIT FAI, No. 35 (August 27, 1936), 1.

of the Catalan economy in so turbulent a period. The anarchists themselves, who were and are most concerned to propagandize the work of the collectives, have produced at best only very limited surveys of them.¹

Eye-witness accounts have also a fragmentary quality which makes generalization from them difficult.² Most of the outside observers who went to Loyalist Spain were understandably interested in examining other aspects of the war than the social and economic ones. They were

1. There are on the collectives: Gaston Leval, Ne Franco Ne Franco, . . . ; Augustín Souchy and Paul Pólgare (Paul Partos), Colectivizaciones: La Obra Constructiva de la Revolución Española, (Barcelona: Ediciones Tierra y Libertad, 1937); and shorter works and reports which will be cited in the text or in the bibliography. The anarcho-syndicalist daily and weekly press, especially Solidaridad Obrera and the Boletín de Información CNT AIT FAI, contain information concerning the work of particular collectives.

2. Even the best of observers must be read with care. Dr. Borkenau, for example, (The Spanish Cockpit, p.80), could on August 6, 1936, state that it was "quite intelligible" that the Generalitat had passed no laws. "Why legislate when there is no power to enforce laws?" But the Generalitat had at this time already promulgated several decrees and continued to do so from the very start of the war.

not able therefore to investigate carefully the various combinations of economic organization which were to be found in Catalonia, Aragon, Levante and Castile. A thorough study of the economic experiments produced by the Spanish working-class movements during the Civil War and in particular of the industrial and agricultural collectives is thus still to be made. In view of such limitations it is best to confine our discussion to several instances of this economic revolution in Catalonia with a few references to Aragon.

Some examples taken from the very important textile industry of Catalonia will give an idea of the differing patterns of workers' control. In Barcelona alone there were at this time, according to one report, 40,000 CNT workers in the textile trades. Throughout the region the CNT controlled 170,000 of the 230,000 textile workers; the others were, or became, members of the UGT. When the war broke out many of the owners and managers of textile firms fled or were killed; the workers occupied the factories. In Catalonia there were some 20,000 belonging to this textile employers' class, about 5,000 of whom were in Barcelona. Of these 20,000, according to this report of the Sindicato Unico of Barcelona,

ten per cent remained in their factories working along-side the working-men, forty per cent were "eliminated from the social sphere" and fifty per cent fled abroad or went into hiding.¹ "Almost all the textile and fabric industry of Catalonia", stated this report in 1937, "is collectivized".²

The España Industrial textile firm, to take one example, had several factories, in Barcelona, Sabadell, and Sans, which employed nearly 2,000 workers. After July these plants were managed by a factory council or Comité Central de la Industria, elected by the workers in assembly. The Committee had nineteen members who met once a week to settle general problems for the industry. Three of the Committee handled financial affairs, three were responsible for marketing, four for purchasing, four for technical matters and five for personnel. Although the directors and engineers had not deserted this particular firm effective power was centered in the Central Committee.³ A factory subject to this type of

1. Souchy and Polgare, op. cit., pp.58-59. The figures on the number of textile workers do seem an underestimate.

2. Ibid., p.60

3. Kaminaki, op. cit., p.223, and Souchy and Polgare, op. cit., pp.71-73.

control was often characterized as "intervenido". One should beware of thinking however that the terms used to describe the different methods of control had the same meaning in every situation. The workers who seized Catalan industry were not given to legal tidiness.

The Committee running the Espana Industrial -- and this was typical of the entire Catalan textile industry -- found themselves faced with two severe problems: maintaining sales and acquiring raw materials. The principal internal markets for Catalan textiles were either in the hands of the Nationalists or cut off from Catalonia: part of Andalusia, Extremadura, all Asturias, and the North of Spain with its densely populated industrial districts. Textile products began to pile up in Catalonia. At the same time it became increasingly difficult to obtain more stocks of cotton from the United States: the drop in the value of the peseta had doubled the cost. No credit was forthcoming from Madrid.¹ The shortage of materials in turn produced a sharp dip in employment; in many textile factories three or four day work weeks had to be introduced. Even this measure did not bring down costs. On the

1. Souchy and Polgare, ibid., pp.73-78.

contrary, workers were still paid a full week's wages, wages which had been increased by fifteen per cent after July 19. In sum, the pressures of the war combined to give the workers' control experiments in the textile field a shaky start.

At one of the Espana Industrial factories Kaminski found the workers, about seventy-five per cent of whom were CNT members, in favor of the same salary for everyone, regardless of the type of work done. This was a principle of anarchist policy. At another textile plant, the San Martín, the workers were opposed to the single wage. This difference in attitude was explained by the fact that sixty per cent of the workers in the second factory were members of the more conservative UGT.¹ So high a proportion of UGT members in the textile trades was, to be sure, an exceptional circumstance in Catalonia. The most plausible explanation is that most of them joined the UGT after the revolution began.

The second largest artificial silk factory in Spain was La Seda of Barcelona. This plant was managed by a Comité de Control Obrero of ten members, five each from

1. Kaminski, op. cit., pp. 226-27.

the UGT and CNT, elected in an assembly of workers held two days after the rising was put down. The factory was not "incautada", or completely taken over by the workers, but only "controlada". The directors of the factory as well as most of the capital were Dutch. Because of the fear of international complications the anarchists desisted from collectivizing foreign-owned industries.¹

Another instance of an "intervenido" or "controlado" enterprise was the Telephone Company in Barcelona. The same managers as before continued in their jobs but with their functions reduced to administering receipts and disbursements. In order for the directors to be able to withdraw company funds from the banks, they had to obtain the consent of a CNT-UGT Comité Central de Control Obrero. Similar telephone control committees were established in all the provinces of Catalonia.²

The Transatlantic Shipping Company was another "intervenido" undertaking, but with the difference that the Control Committee contained two delegates from the

1. M.G. Muñoz, "La Clase obrera pone de manifiesto una vez más su capacidad constructiva", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1383 (September 19, 1936), 5.

2. Boletín de Información CNT AIT FAI, No. 32 (August 24/25, 1936), 2-3.

Generalitat as well as representatives of the CNT and UGT.¹

In most of the instances of workers' control which have been referred to, the enterprises had been organized by the CNT for several years. For this reason the existing trade-union factory committees which were described in an earlier chapter could transform themselves into control committees without any great difficulty. That was of course one of the principles of anarcho-syndicalist theory. But the possibility of this relatively easy change did not always exist. There were instances, although atypical, where the CNT had not been strong before the war but gained influence rapidly after July 19. One such example was a collectivized shoemakers' shop in Lerida. This shop is interesting for two other reasons. First, it was a case where a collective and not simply a workers' control system of the intervenido type was formed. Second, the fairly detailed account of the collective which follows throws a certain light on the spirit of the economic revolution in Catalonia.

1. Boletín de Información CNT AIT FAI, No. 26 (August 17, 1936), 1-3.

The Shop Delegate wrote the report:

The "C.N.T.-F.A.I. Collectivized Shoemakers' Workshop of Lerida" was born as a result of the fascist insurrection of July 19, 1936.

Victory in the street was of little use to us if we could not win mastery with the tools of work in the shop. Therefore the hand shoemakers -- in Lerida at that time there were no leather workshops or factories -- who sympathized with the C.N.T., were called to a meeting at the Convent of los Mercedarios, which later became the headquarters of the C.N.T. Trade Unions. This meeting set up the Collective Workshop to which each comrade promised voluntarily to bring his own private tools. For machinery there was a Singer sewing machine (and some other equipment)

The Collective was composed of 20 or 22 companeros and companeras.... A Shop Committee was elected: five comrades; and from them one Delegade Responsable.

With this little baggage and the lever of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. as a basis of support, we had enough to start operating the new economy, unexpectedly placed in the hands of the laboring class by the boorishness and ambition of capitalism. We were going to shape into reality what up to then had been only the "theorizing dreams" of Anarcho-Syndicalism.

I should point out that during the clandestine period, until the February elections, and in the months following until July 19, there were only two shoemakers and two tanners who belonged to the Sindicato Unico de Oficios Varios - C.N.T. of Lerida.

Once we were installed in the first place we could acquire, and got the sections organized, we began intensive work for the front. All anyone had to do was present a certificate from the U.G.T. or C.N.T. trade-union organizations or the Generalitat in

order to be given what the certificate listed... We worked intensively without looking to see if one person was doing more than another.

By unanimous and voluntary agreement we established the ten hour day. In the first months the Generalitat paid our wages in exchange for the shoes we made and sent it. Although some were in favor of the single wage we could not institute it, not because people were "bad", but because of the egoism inherited from the centuries. A differentiated wage schedule was established on as fair a basis as possible. If we could not go completely to Libertarian Communism -- the scaling of the mountain was impossible at that time -- we did what we could to approach the Collectivism of Bakunin.

General Assemblies of the Workshop were held in which the problems of the Collective were freely discussed....The Workshop Committee took all the suggestions...in order to study them, except those which were already agreed on by the Assembly. Great care was taken to please everyone and to come to solutions which would make for the welfare of the People. The Shop-Committee was forced -- especially the militants -- to see that people realized that "it" was everyone's, that there were no "masters" to obey, that we all had a responsibility to the individual comrade and that the individual comrade had a responsibility to the Collective -- that this was the work of the Anarchist ideas incarnated in the C.N.T.

The Collective prospered. Comrades who came from Aragon, Andalusia and Barcelona joined. Full wages were paid to those injured by accident at work and to those who were ill. One comrade whose legs were crippled from birth and who was advised by the doctors to have one amputated was paid his full wages and expenses for six months at the clinic....

There was a merchant who asked us to sell him sandals and offered us 80 pesetas a pair. We bluntly refused him and sold them to the people directly for 50 or 60 pesetas. This was the only way to eliminate the parasites of the capitalist regime, who still remained and whom we wanted to eliminate....

Four or five months after we began, the Generalitat stopped paying our wages. We continued on our own account, clearly demonstrating that "the emancipation of the workers is the work of the workers themselves".

...In conclusion, it is my duty to say that all the comrades who belonged to the "C.N.T.-F.A.I. Collectivized Shoemakers' Workshop of Lerida", from its creation until March 26, 1938, when Lerida had to be evacuated, fulfilled their duties honorably and disinterestedly within the Great Confederal Family.

...It is along the straight paths of Liberty that Liberty is reached: giving freedom to all to be Free. 1

A larger and more important case of nearly complete workers' control or collectivization, was the urban transport system of Barcelona. The flight of the managers of the tramway, underground and bus lines after July 19 left the workers with all three units in their hands.

1. Aquilino Gainzarain, Federacion Nacional de Industria Fabril, Textil, Vestir y Anexos: Taller Colectivo de Zapateros - C.N.T.-F.A.I.-de Lérida (M.L.E.-C.N.T. en Francia A.I.T.: Sección de Iniciativas Proyectos y Estudios de las Federaciones Nacionales de Industria, 1946), typescript, pp.1-4, 6.

These were seized in the first days after the fighting. Dr. Borkenau's diary for August 5, the day he arrived in Barcelona, records his surprise at finding the trams and buses running.¹ On July 24 the tramwaymen of the city met and decided to manage the lines themselves. They chose a Comité de Empresa of seven workers to take charge.² The framework of organization for the tramways was followed by the bus and subway lines as well. The tramway workers were by far the most numerous of the three services, with 3,000 men; the buses had 700; the Metro Transversal, 376.³

To govern the transport system for the entire city,⁴ a Control Committee was formed which contained representatives of the tramways, buses, the two subways and two funicular railways. The number of delegates which any enterprise had on this committee varied from one to four, depending

1. The Spanish Cockpit, p.71.

2. Gaston Leval, Social Reconstruction in Spain (London: "Spain and the World", 1938), p.33.

3. Peirats, op. cit., vol. I, p.170.

4. For a discussion of the collectivization of the Catalan railroads, see Leval, Né Franco Né Stalin, pp.98-111.

on the importance of the line. Although each enterprise was administered independently, subject to the control of the top Control Committee, the surplus funds on one line could be used to give financial aid to another faring less well.¹ The Committees in all the transport lines sought to institute economies and began by lowering the salaries of those engineers who had remained to cooperate with the workers. Although the Generalitat named supervisors for each of the transport enterprises, their role was passive, that of observers.

With respect to trade-union representation on the urban lines, the Directing Committee of the Metro Transversal was entirely anarcho-syndicalist; the Gran Metro on the other hand had both CNT and UGT representatives on its Committee. The Comité Obrero de Empresa which replaced the former management of the Autobus Company was composed of six members of the CNT.

Two subcommittees of the Autobus Committee directed the manufacture and repair of cars in collectivized workshops. Dr. Borkenau visited one such shop and pronounced

1. Leval, Economic Reconstruction in Spain, p.34.

it "undeniably...a big success for the CNT."¹

...Only three weeks after the beginning of the civil war, two weeks after the end of the general strike, it seems to run as smoothly as if nothing had happened. I visited the men at their machines.... Since socialization this factory had repaired two buses, finished one which had been under construction and constructed a completely new one... It is a large factory, and things could not have been made to look nice for the benefit of a visitor had they really been in a bad muddle.²

Borkenau makes a number of important qualifications which make hasty generalizations from this case inadvisable. Nonetheless:

...One fact remains: it is an extraordinary achievement for a group of workers to take over a factory, under however favourable conditions, and within a few days to make it run with complete regularity. It bears brilliant witness to the general standard of efficiency of the Catalan worker and to the organizing capacities of the Barcelona trade unions.³

Even this necessarily piecemeal discussion of several instances of workers' control of industry makes clear

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1. The Spanish Cockpit, p.89.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid., pp.90-91.

the lack of uniformity in the revolutionary economy. But several conclusions do suggest themselves. In some cases the CNT was in complete control of the enterprises involved; in others (the majority of cases in Catalonia), anarcho-syndicalists were dominant, with a minority of UGT members; in a few places the UGT predominated. Workers' control was so complete in some industries, as in the Barcelona transport services or the Lerida shoemakers' organization, that one can label the system "collectivist". In other cases, such as the Seda factory, the old managers stayed on and the workers' role was that of a control commission. A final conclusion is that factors beyond the type of control system used could be decisive in determining the progress of the workers' experiments. For example, the transport services were able, on the whole, to function successfully while the textile industry suffered from loss of markets and scarcity of raw materials.

B. Attempts at Coordination.

There were attempts in the early months of the war in Catalonia to wring some kind of order out of the chaos of juntas and committees. The first such effort was

the establishment on August 11 of a Consejo de Economía. This Council, which contained representatives of the various trade unions and political parties, was to be a deliberative organ for the purpose of coordinating economic life. It cannot be said that it ever achieved its task. The policies which the Council advocated at the time of its creation are nonetheless interesting as an early indication of the economic objectives of the CNT. The Council was formed under anarcho-syndicalist auspices. The measures in the Council program included:

1. Regulation of production in accordance with consumption needs.
2. Monopoly of foreign trade.
3. Collectivization of large rural estates, to be exploited by the peasants' unions and with the help of the Generalitat.
4. Reduction of urban rents.
5. Collectivization of large industries, public services and transport.
6. Confiscation and collectivization of the establishments abandoned by their owners.
7. Encouragement of the cooperative system in the distribution of goods.
8. Workers' control of banking until the nationalization of banking operations.
9. Workers' control of all firms still in private hands.

10. Absorption of unemployed workers by agriculture and industry.

11. Suppression of all taxes as soon as possible in favor of a single tax.¹

Later, in October, after the CNT had entered the Generalitat Government, another endeavor to bring order to the Catalan economy was made.² This was the famous and controversial Decree of Collectivizations of October 26, 1936. Some writers, having read the decree, have assumed that it gives a true picture of the organization of Catalan industry during the war. Because the decree was so much discussed in 1936 and because it was an effort at rationalization of the workers' control systems, it may be useful to ask what the decree was and how it worked.

1. "La labor del Consejo de Economía", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1357 (August 20, 1936), 6.

2. Kaminski, who was sympathetic to the CNT, comments that there was a complete lack of statistics in Catalonia, especially of the sort required for a collectivized economy. "The new economy is an enterprise that works without inventory and without balance-sheet. So all its work takes place in a void. Nobody knows what the stocks are or what requisitions have been made. Catalan industry is made up of many individual enterprises which have not even made agreements on prices or markets". Each factory made the same goods without paying any attention to other firms. Op. cit., pp. 219-20.

The decree, according to its text, was based on the Generalitat policy of advocating collectivization of large enterprises while allowing small business to remain in private hands. But the expropriations and collectivizations had already occurred; no Generalitat decree was going to cause workers to take to the factories and institute their own control; they already had it. The intention of the decree, then, was to infuse order into the pattern of spontaneously organized collectives. To this end, the industrial and business enterprises of the region were classified into:

1. Collectivized Enterprises, in which the workers were to direct the firm by means of a Factory Council.
2. Private Enterprises, to be directed by the owner or manager, with the advice and collaboration of a Workers' Control Council. ¹

All enterprises employing over one hundred workers, as well as those owned by rebels or by persons who had fled, were to be forcibly collectivized. If the workers

1. Paraphrases of the provisions of the decree are based on the Spanish text published in: Conselleria D'Economia, Generalitat de Catalunya, Decret sobre la Collectivització i Control de la Indústria i el Comerç a Catalunya (Edicions de la Conselleria D'Economia: Barcelona, 1936).

so voted, plants with less than one hundred employees could also be collectivized, as could enterprises declared essential by the Council of Economy.

The Factory Councils in charge of directing the Collectivized Enterprises were to be elected by the workers in general assembly. These Councils were to be responsible as well to so-called General Councils of Industry composed of representatives from the Factory Councils of each industry and the trade-union organizations and delegates from the Council of Economy. A Council of Industry was to have power to lay down compulsory regulations to the Factory Councils in the industry concerned on almost every aspect of production. The Industrial Councils in turn were to be dependent on the regulations of the Council of Economy, the advisory body to the Councillor of Economic Affairs, at the time the CNT representative Juan P. Fabregas.

The Workers' Control Committees in Private Enterprises were also to be elected bodies with fairly strict control over the management of the firm. They were to control conditions of labor, check all financial transactions and collaborate closely with the manager in the production process.

After some legal bush-beating the Collectivizations Decree also provided for the payment of compensation to foreign owners of Collectivized Enterprises.

Accordingly to Sr. Fabregas, who wrote the Decree, it was approved by the Generalitat Government only after long and bitter wrangling until four o'clock in the morning of the day it was announced. The principal opposition, he said, came from the republicans, led by Jose Tarradellas, Companys' right-hand man ("I was ready to kill him", said Fabregas).¹ Esquerra opposition to the Collectivizations Decree is certainly understandable inasmuch as the party stood for the interests of the Catalan middle-class. The PSUC also opposed the promulgation of the decree. Rather than industrial collectivization the communists favored expropriation and nationalization of rebel-owned firms; for the others, they urged the continuation of private ownership. The communists did say they were for workers' control in non-collectivized enterprises but in the form of advisory committees to assist the management. This was of course

1. Juan P. Fabregas, in an interview with the writer, January 4, 1953, London.

very different from the CNT policy of complete workers' control whenever possible. The communist drive for nationalization of industry and de-collectivization became more fervent in Catalonia toward the end of 1936 and in early 1937 but it became really important there only after May 1937. The anarcho-syndicalists were not completely dislodged from control of Catalan industry even by the end of the war, although their power had been very much weakened by the centralizing policy of the Madrid Government.

Anarcho-syndicalist opinion of the Decree of Collectivizations is consistent, and the judgment is a highly critical one. Santillan notes that the revolutionary economy of Catalonia worked "by spontaneous impulse, from the bottom up and was not directed from the top down". For this reason, he adds a warning:

...For those who may want to take the legal formalizations as a basis for the study of the experience of the socialized economy in Spain; the decree of collectivizations of Catalonia did nothing but disfigure the spirit of the popular will. Happily in practice it turned out to be a paper decree like so many others. ¹

1. "Socialización de la Economía Española por los Sindicatos y Colectividades Agrarias e Industriales", La Campana (a Buenos Aires monthly), No. 00 (August 1948), p.66.

Gaston Leval attacks the Collectivizations Decree for legalizing an existing situation and, by laying down rules for expropriations, causing a tendency to limit further seizures. Although he does not believe the decree was intended to be "counter-revolutionary", the consequence of passing legislation on the collectives was only to arrogate to the state the right, when it was able, to step in and direct the economy.¹

Juan Peiró, given to plain-speaking as no other anarcho-syndicalist, said that "a CNT Councillor of Economy [Fábregas] adopted a centipede which lacked the most essential feet and naturally it walked with a frightful limp". Those other men who followed in this post all paid too much attention to foreign trade rather than to perfecting the internal economy.²

Peiró's conclusions correspond with those of Kaminski, who in May 1937 wrote, "It is still impossible to judge the rules created by the decrees. The General Councils at present exist only in theory".³ Fábregas, said Kaminski,

1. Leval, Ne Franco, Ne Stalin, pp.82-83, 87-88.

2. Juan Peiró, Problemas y Cintarazos (Rennes: Imp. Reunies, 1946, first published 1939), p.221.

3. Kaminski, op cit., p.215

envisaged all Catalan economic problems as purely a question of acquiring new markets and gave little regard to the problem of production, while the charts in the Economic Councillor's office showing the new economic order represented nothing but organization on paper.¹

With respect to obeying the decree on collectives, it seems clear that the workers usually did as they liked. For example, the dockworkers who unloaded coal were nearly all working for small firms which did not employ the minimum of one hundred workers required for legal collectivization. Yet the dockers would only work in collectivized houses, and there were no unorganized longshoremen. Therefore, legal or not, these establishments were collectivized.²

Another observer tells of a firm of eighty-three employees, twelve of whom voted for collectivization at the first workers' assembly. At the second meeting a union leader pointed out that everyone could vote as he wished but that every vote against collectivization would cost the man dearly who thus declared himself an enemy of the working-class. The vote to collectivize was unanimous.³

1. Kaminski, op. cit., p. 219

2. Ibid., p. 222.

3. Raynaud, En Espagne "Rouge", p. 97.

In view of such evidence as has been cited here, one may conclude that the gap between law and fact in the confused economy of early Civil War Catalonia is probably better illustrated by the famous Decree of Collectivizations than any other single phenomenon. The decree was opposed by two of the leading political forces in the Generalitat, the Esquerra and the PSUC, and was ignored by the CNT, the very organization whose representative produced it.

C. The Agricultural Collectives.

The agrarian policy of the CNT was to collectivize both the estates expropriated from large landowners and the lands of small-holders as well. But according to a resolution of a Congreso Regional de Campesinos held in Barcelona on September 5 and 6, the right of the small proprietor to cultivate as much of his land as he could himself work was to be respected, so long as he did not prejudice the interest of the collective. Small tenants and small-holders were to be convinced of the virtues of collectivization by example.¹

1. Boletín de Información CNT AIT EAI, No. 43 (September 6, 1936), 5-6.

In spite of the expressed policy of conversion by persuasion, the advance of the popular militias, especially into Aragon, brought collectivization to many pueblos by force. Peasants with small pieces of land were often, quite naturally, not prepared to place them at the disposal of a collective. The views of these landownⁿg peasants were championed with increasing vigor by the communist Minister of Agriculture, Vicente Uribe. Uribe urged the expropriation of all rebel-owned estates but, rather than collectivization, the parceling out of the lands to the peasants who worked them.¹

In Catalonia, the PSUC, pursuing the same policy as the communist Minister of Agriculture in Madrid, was supported in its antipathy for the rural collectives by the Rabassaires' Union. Although the rabassaires were not landowners but tenants, their special form of contract gave them relative security of tenure and a resulting conservatism. José Calvet, who was president of the Rabassaires, and Councillor of Agriculture throughout the

1. Uribe's October 7, 1936, decree providing for the expropriation of insurgent estates was not as revolutionary as it appeared: the estates had already been expropriated. The text of the decree may be found in 7 de Octubre: Una Nueva Era en el Campo (Madrid: Ministerio de Agricultura, 1936).

the war, made little response to the constant pleas of the CNT for Generalitat financial assistance for the agrarian collectives. When in early 1937 the anarcho-syndicalists gave the number of agricultural collectives as "some three hundred", they added that only about one hundred of these were able to develop normally. Continually Solidaridad Obrera had to beg the CNT industrial unions to contribute funds to the collectives in the campo.¹

The reluctance of the Rabassaire Councillor to grant aid to the collectives was reinforced by a Generalitat decree of February 1937 dealing with the organization of Catalan agriculture. The provisions of this decree were not calculated to forward the work of the collectives. The order declared that the lands tilled by the old cultivators of the soil, even if the owners of the land were rebels, must be respected. Now the rabassaires were a peculiar class of tenant-farmers who were often more prosperous than the owners of the land they worked. Calvet's decree safeguarded this right of the rabassaires to continue cultivating "their" land privately, without fear of

1. "Una Necesidad Urgente: El Apoyo del Proletariado Industrial a las Colectividades Agrícolas", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1544 (March 25, 1936), 12.

collectivization. Moreover, with the old owners dispossessed, the decree, by protecting the leased lands from collectivization, in effect made the rabassaires landowners in their own right. The rabassaires and the PSUC may have been pleased by this development but the CNT insisted that it would only give rise to a new agrarian bourgeoisie. Even before the war some rabassaires had hired braceros to till the land for them and it was this group of poor peasants whom the CNT insisted were being ignored. The only lands, according to Calvet's decree, which could be collectivized were those which the families of the rentiers -- read "rabassaires" -- were unable to work. There was little doubt to the CNT that the land left over for the poor peasants would be the worst land.¹

The Generalitat decree embodied another blow at CNT policy by providing that agricultural collectives which had been organized along lines contrary to the clauses of the decree were to be dismantled, and that any member of an agrarian collective who wanted to quit it was free not only to leave but also to take with him any land

1. Federico Urales, "La paz entre españoles", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1521 (February 26, 1937), 3.

or tools he had contributed.¹ This sort of legislation gives some indication of the opposition to the anarcho-syndicalist endeavours to revolutionize the Catalan countryside. The fact that the rabassaires were traditionally hard-working and efficient farmers who enjoyed considerable support in Catalonia did not make the CNT efforts easier. Although, as has been said, a number of agricultural collectives were established in Catalonia,² we must turn to Aragon to find the more characteristic anarcho-syndicalist attempts at agrarian revolution.

A socialist observer writing before May 1937 stated that roughly seventy per cent of the land area of that part of Aragon in Loyalist hands had been collectivized. He gave the number of UGT or CNT collectives in operation in Aragon as four hundred and fifty, most of which were devoted purely to agriculture or stock-raising. Nearly 300,000 people, or a sizeable majority of the majority of the inhabitants of Loyalist Aragon, were

1. J. Valero, "Comentando unos acuerdos", ibid., 9.

2. For descriptions of several agricultural collectives in Catalonia, see Peirats, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 302-13.

members of collectives, according to this report.¹

Delegates to a regional conference in Caspe in February 1937 claimed to represent at least 114,430 members of two hundred and seventy-five agricultural collectives in Aragon.²

The majority of the agrarian communes in Aragon were organized in the first three months of the war. The sweeping in of the popular militias drove off most of the large landowners who had not been killed by Durruti's initial column and the advancing militias usually left a

1. Alardo Prats, Vanguardia y Retaguardia: La Guerra y la Revolución en las Comarcas Aragonesas (Ediciones Yunque, Santiago, n.d. 2nd ed., p.88. The second edition contains an epilogue written after the August 1937 attacks on the Aragon collectives. These figures -- all the figures given here -- must be treated as approximations with a bias toward exaggeration. An anarchist writer says, "Over half a million peasants [in Aragon] have, driven by their necessities, sufferings and ideals, taken the reins of their destinies into their own hands..." Augustín Souchy Bauer, Entre los Campesinos de Aragon: El Comunismo Libertario en las Comarcas Liberadas (Ediciones Tierra y Libertad: Barcelona, 1937), p.27.

2. Memoria: La Obra de la Revolución, (Documento No. 118); Las Colectividades Campesinas de Aragon: Datos del Congreso Constituyente de la Federación de Colectividades, 14-15 febrero 1937 (Alcañiz: Confederación Regional del Trabajo de Aragón, Rioja y Navarra, 1937), typescript, p.12. The report notes that the figure for total membership is not exact. Many collectives listed only heads of families as members, failing to count others in the family who also worked for the collective; yet other localities, so long as all able men were working in the collective, listed the entire population as members.

string of collectives in their wake. Leval wrote that "the mechanism of the formation of the Aragonese collectives has been generally the same".¹ With the landowners gone, popular assemblies decided what course of action to follow, which in Aragon was customarily collectivization. The next step was to harvest the crops both on the large estates and in the fields of the small proprietors who remained. Groups were organized to reap and thresh the wheat. Dr. Borkenau describes watching the peasants move from granary to granary in Serinena, utilizing the expropriated threshing machines.² These grupos de trabajo, normally composed of five or ten members, were the smallest unit of Aragonese collectivism. Not only the landless day laborers but also the tenant-farmers and

1. Social Reconstruction in Spain, p. 12.

2. The Spanish Cockpit, p. 103.

small owners joined the collectives.¹ Following the vote to collectivize the peasants took possession of the land, cattle and tools of the former owners.²

After an inventory of the expropriated property, each collective distributed the land to the groups to be worked. Produce was transported to a common storehouse where subsistence goods were shared equally, the rest being kept for exchange with other communes or urban collectives. Unlike collectivized industries, where work was usually collectivized and consumption individual, the peasant communes of Aragon collectivized consumption as well.

1. Leval (Social Reconstruction in Spain, p.13) says that "in Aragon 75 per cent. of small proprietors have voluntarily adhered to the new order of things. Those who refused have been respected [*italics his*]...." But Dr. Borkenau declares that at Fraga Durruti's column killed thirty-eight 'fascists' in the village, including some of the richer peasants. "Evidently in this village the agrarian revolution had not been the result of passionate struggle by the peasants themselves, but an almost automatic consequence of the executions..." Ibid., pp.97-98. At Serinera on the other hand the anarchists had killed less and had not used force on the peasants unwilling to participate in the collective. Example was expected to work the change. Ibid., p.103.

2. Souchy, Entre los Campesinos..., pp.30-31.

To the CNT these Aragonese collectives were strides down the road of comunismo libertario.¹ Whenever possible

1. Here is a characteristic statement explaining comunismo libertario:

"There is only one regime which can give the workers liberty, well-being and happiness: it is Libertarian Communism.

"Libertarian Communism is the organization of Society without a State and without private property.

"It is unnecessary to invent anything or create any new social organization in order to realize it.

"The centers of organization around which the economic life of tomorrow will be organized exist in present-day Society: they are the Syndicate and the free Municipality.

"Workers in the factories and other enterprises..., group together spontaneously in the Syndicate.

"With the same spontaneity the inhabitants of the same locality join together in the Municipality, an assembly known from the origins of Mankind; in the Municipality they have an open road to the solution, on a local basis, of all the problems of communal living.

"These two organizations, federative and democratic, will have sovereignty over their own decisions, without being submitted to the tutelage of any higher organ.

"Nonetheless they will be led to confederate for the purpose of common economic activities and, by forming Federations of Industry, to set up organs of liaison and communication.

"In this way the Syndicate and the Municipality will take collective possession of everything that now belongs to the sphere of private property; they will regulate production and consumption, this is, economic life, in every locality, although they will leave men in charge of their own actions: that is to say, Liberty.

"Libertarian Communism thus makes compatible the satisfaction of economic necessities and respect for our aspirations to Liberty.

"Because of the love of Liberty the libertarians repudiate the communism of the convent, the barracks, the ant-hill, or the herd, as in Russia.

"Under Libertarian Communism, egoism is unknown; it is replaced by the broadest social love."

money was abolished as, for example, in Calanda, a town dominated by the CNT, where 3,500 of a population of 4,500 were members of the collective.¹ In Calanda, as in other pueblos where money was done away with, coupons were used to buy food and clothing. Usually, the smaller the settlement, the more thoroughly it was collectivized. In Alcaniz trade was left in private hands; in Mas de las Matas, nearly four times less populous, no private stores remained.² According to Henri Rabasseire;

The Aragonese collectives responded above all to the requirement of Equality. The variety of economic schemes are explained not by differences in local conditions but rather by the chance which placed at the head of the collectives a man more or less educated in or given to this or that monetary or technical system. The most prosperous communes were undoubtedly those which were administered by the workers who belonged to trade unions and who returned to the village. One even found intellectuals, lawyers, liberal or left municipal councillors among the administrators of collectives; these people excelled especially in all sorts of technical innovations, in the founding of new workshops and also in the singular ingenuity of their monetary schemes. The rural

1. Souchy, Entre los Campesinos..., p.45

2. Ibid., pp. 45, 55.

confederates voluntarily followed any technician if he allowed himself to be democratically controlled, and they applied any plan which seemed compatible with the egalitarian ideal.¹

In Aragon delegates from all the collectives in a particular district joined to form a Comarcal Federation which maintained warehouses and saw to the disposition of the agricultural products of the member collectives. The Federation sent the produce either to Barcelona or to the Federacion Regional de Colectividades of Aragon, which at the Caspe conference of February, was established as the economic center for the entire region. The Regional Federation in turn arranged for the exchange of products among the different comarcas and, if necessary, with other regions. It was in this fashion that the CNT sought to translate into practice its dream of federally-organized, economically-linked free communes.

The following description of the collectivist experiment in the town of Oliete gives a concrete indication of some of the aspects of the agrarian revolution in Aragon:

1. Rabasseire, Espagne Creuset Politique, p.127.

The Settlement [of Oliete] is situated on the banks of the Martin River, a tributary of the Ebro in the province of Teruel. Its 2,200 inhabitants were almost all small-holders before the war.

On July 19 the barracks guards sought to terrorize those persons who held to a revolutionary ideology. The men of the town, especially the known militants of the C.N.T., left and returned several days later. They had joined the anti-fascist C.N.T. column called "Jubert" and forced the civil guards to flee. Several fascists fled with the guards. Up till now no armed forces have entered the town. Two anarchists who had already suffered persecutions in the times of Primo de Rivera, are the organizers of the town. They lived as refugees in France for many years. A little before July 19 they returned to their home town. They were familiar with anarchist doctrine; they knew how to distinguish among the different socialist systems and ideologies. Their efforts fell on fertile soil. The ideas of Pi y Margall and Anselmo Lorenzo were known in the settlement. Collectivism had long years of study behind it. Theory up to then, it was now going to be put into practice.

After the town was free of armed fascists, the people agreed to abolish "individualism", that is, working and consuming on an individual basis. Money was suppressed, the land was divided into zones for the labor groups which were formed. Livestock remained in the hands of its owners. No significant proportion of cattle was in private hands. In some cases a more equitable distribution than that of former times was instituted. Today there are plans to establish a large pasture ground. The new collectivist system requires that consumption be separated from production. Every one must be able to satisfy his needs. The most important product is olive oil. Sharing is done in this fashion: 34 liters of oil per head for the rest of

the year. Potatoes, beans and green vegetables, at discretion. Wine, a liter a day. All this free. Every adult person has the right to consume 0.40 pesetas a day, twelve pesetas a month. Children under 14 get half this amount. A factory for making soup paste has been set up where the sacristy was before. The consumers' cooperative is the old church.

It was Sunday when I visited the town last [said Souchy]. Everyone was working in the fields. The harvest had to be got in. The community agreed that everyone would work every Sunday until the job was done....

There is a shortage of milk. The town has 14 cows; a medical certificate is necessary in order to get milk. There are 149 sick people in the town and they get special rations....

Exact accounts are kept. The quantities handed out are noted in the consumers' booklet given to each person. The cooperative also notes everything in its books. At any moment one can see the exact amount of food and other necessities which every person has received.

Statistics are also kept on the consumption of tools and other equipment by the carpenters, blacksmith shop and other trades. Socialization has been carried out completely. The work of the collective shows every sign of activity.

The town imports goods worth 30,000 pesetas every month; exports are at 35,000. So the town has an active trade balance. Money exists only for exchange with other localities. People pay no taxes, rent or light bills.

Work in the countryside is done in groups. One bell has been left in the belfry, the others taken down. The one remaining calls

people to work and eat every morning and noon. Moreover, wrist watches have been bought for the delegados de grupos to help them distribute time and keep to the schedule.

Before, the small owners worked almost half the year away from home. They could not support themselves by staying in the town; they did not have enough land. The lands of the Municipality are now sufficient to feed the entire population. Workers are needed: several hundred of the young men are at the front. The militiamen also feel themselves to be sons of the community and have sent five thousand pesetas to the Collective. They want to send still more so that the collective can buy new farm machinery.

The members of the Committees of the Collective are enthusiastic anarchists and they display an enormous sense of initiative...

Three persons who were constantly criticizing everything in the collective have been expelled. A few days later they asked to be allowed to return.

There is no Municipal Council. The Committee of the Collective is the highest authority. The Secretary of the former mayor is now the town judge. On July 19th there existed only the C.N.T. A month later some partisans of the Catalan Esquerra founded a U.G.T. syndicate. The C.N.T. placed a house at the disposal of this union, and there was mutual toleration....

There are F.A.I. groups and an organization of the Libertarian Youth which has 130 members. The Youth have their headquarters in the office of the

old mayor. They have created an Atheneum and a Library. The jail is empty and is being used as a warehouse for building materials. There are no armed guards. Fifty kilometers to the West is the front but the people, who breathe an air of deep peace, are keeping watch on their liberty and working for their prosperity.¹

In the summer of 1937, following the "May Days"² and the formation of a Republican Government which excluded both Largo Caballero and the CNT, the Aragonese collectives suffered a crippling blow. On August 11 the CNT-dominated Council of Defense of Aragon was dissolved and its president, Joaquín Ascaso, jailed on a charge of stealing jewels. A military brigade largely composed of communist forces under the leadership of Enrique Lister marched in behind the Aragon lines, arrested and imprisoned members of the Council of Defense and the CNT Regional Committee, dissolved the municipal councils and broke up many of the confederal collectives.³ Those collectives which were able to

1. Souchy, Entre los Campesinos.... pp. 59-63

2. See below, p. 428 ff.

3. Prats, op. cit., pp. 170-72, and Memoria Sobre "El Terrorde las Divisones Comunistas en Aragón" (Alcañiz: Comité Regional [de la C.N.T. de Aragón], 1937), typescript. This Memoria contains the report of the Regional Committee on the August events.

continue after the attack had to carry on with much smaller numbers than before.

It is true that only after the period under consideration in this study that the "counter-revolution" on the agrarian front reached its greatest intensity. Yet it seems advisable at least to indicate the August events in Aragon: they were perhaps the most dramatic example of the drive of the state against the revolution in agriculture wrought by the CNT.

CHAPTER XIV

ANARCHIST MINISTERS

It is one of the tragedies of the Spanish anarchist movement that the anarchists' first opportunity for translating into action their conception of the new society should have been occasioned by a war which demanded that the revolution be postponed. The anarcho-syndicalists sought to make war and social revolution at the same time. But modern wars are fought successfully only on a basis of centralized discipline and control.¹ Social revolutions, at least on anarchist principles, are in nerve and fiber decentralized affairs. This was the dilemma.

If the war were lost the workers' triumphs in the rearguard would be lost as well. Of this there was no doubt. But if the war were to be won, the anarcho-syndicalists would have to give up some of the gains the first weeks of the fighting had brought them. Even then there was no guarantee that military victory would be the reward of such sacrifice. In the long run

1. This is not of course to say that anarchists accept this necessity.

it proved to be not CNT concessions but foreign intervention which decided the issue. But in the stages of the war under consideration here, this development could not be known. The CNT and the FAI had to choose and they chose to put the war ahead of the revolution. This decision meant acknowledgment of the need for greater central control and organization. For the CNT and the FAI it meant collaboration with the state, both in Madrid and Barcelona.

There were two other courses the anarcho-syndicalists might have taken. The first was imposition of their own rule by force. "If this view had won", said Federica Montseny, "there would have been a dictatorship as bad as Stalin's".¹ With the formation of the Militias Committee and collaboration with other anti-insurgent organizations in Catalonia, the CNT and FAI pronounced emphatically against dictatorship of the anarcho-syndicalist proletariat.

The second possible course of action for the CNT was to refuse collaboration with the state, to remain outside the government and proclaim libertarian

1. In an interview with the writer, Toulouse, September 12, 1952.

communism. Had we adopted this course, Senora Montseny concluded, "the war would have been over in six months".¹

The CNT and the FAI chose the middle way, for them the grievous way: participation in government. There is no evidence that the majority of the supporters of the CNT and FAI opposed this outright collaborationist position. There was no disavowal of anarcho-syndicalist leadership of any proportions until the spring of 1937. Even then such outcry against CNT intervention in the state was a minority phenomenon. But if there was little publicly expressed dissent by anarcho-syndicalist workers from the turn their organization had taken at higher levels, the rumblings of nether discontent were there, protesting against the gradual unpeeling of the layers of social revolution. For the CNT it was an era of schizophrenia. For anarchists fighting a war as one member of a highly diversified coalition, what else could it have been?

The radical break with the anarcho-syndicalist past came first in Catalonia, when the CNT accepted posts in the Council of the Generalitat. Five weeks later the

1. In an interview with the writer, Toulouse, September 12, 1952.

anarcho-syndicalists followed this move by a still more astonishing action: they sent their representatives to the Government of the Spanish Republic.

A. The CNT Enters the Council of the Generalitat.

September 1936 was the month of changes for the CNT. The anarcho-syndicalists began the month by refusing to join one Government and closed it by entering another. On September 4th came the resignation of Jose Giral's republican cabinet, an anomalous Government when it was the revolutionary workers of Spain who were organizing the fighting forces to defend the Republic and who were in so many places exercising the functions of government. The only possible man to head the new Government assumed office. Largo Caballero formed a Popular Front cabinet of three right and three left socialists, five republicans and two communists. It was a "win the war" Government and little else was said. The anarcho-syndicalists were offered posts but refused them. Loyal support the CNT would promise to the Government but because "ministerial collaboration implied the abandonment of its old insurrectional line, such

collaboration could not be given, no matter how dramatic the circumstances."¹

The CNT urgently held a National Plenum of Regionals to enunciate its attitude to the second war cabinet. The delegates declared for:

1. Determined support of the new Government so that it can carry out its main task of smashing the fascist insurrection.

2. Creation in every Ministry of a Commission or Advisory Council composed of representatives of the C.N.T., U.G.T., Popular Front and one delegate from the Government.

3. No intervention of the State in the social advances achieved by the workers in Catalonia and Levante in the new order which sprang up after the Army rebellion.²

Within less than two weeks the CNT would be demanding a much greater voice in the conduct of affairs than representation on advisory committees in the ministries of the Republic. Those demands were to result in November in the CNT sending its representatives into the Government of the Republic. But already in September the anarcho-syndicalists were brought -- so quixotic were

1. "La C.N.T. y el Nuevo Gobierno", CNT, No. 396, (September 6, 1936), 1.

2. Ibid.

the pressures of the war -- to intervene in the state in order better to prosecute the fight and to protect the social advances achieved by the workers. On September 27 the newspapers of Barcelona carried the startling announcement that representatives of ^{the} Catalan CNT had just entered the Consejo of the Generalitat. This was, strictly speaking, the first time in history that anarcho-syndicalists had ever joined a Government.

The reason for this abrupt rupture with anarchist tradition was that Catalonia was being subjected to strong pressure from Madrid on the question of arms supplies and financial assistance for buying raw materials and machinery. Because Catalonia was now being ruled by the anarchists, a defense of Catalonia against Madrid was a defense of the CNT. The revolutionary workers who replaced the Generalitat as the new autonomous authority were confronted with an exceedingly effective boycott by the Central Government.

And Catalonia needed aid. In the East of Spain -- Catalonia, Levante and Aragon -- where the CNT was strongest, there were no arms factories nor were there the iron, coal or other raw materials, or the machinery, required for the manufacture of guns, tanks and cannon.

The principal arms factories of Asturias had either fallen to the Nationalists or were cut off by the rebel armies from the rest of Spain. Certainly the conservative (but Loyalist) Basque Catholics were not willing to send material resources or funds to the anarcho-syndicalists. The Basques would not even let the CNT into their Defense Junta. The main hope of Catalonia accordingly focused on Madrid: the Central Government was steward of Spain's sizeable gold stock.¹

Even before the Caballero Government, delegates from Catalonia had entreated Madrid for help. Santillán and Díaz Sandino talked to Giral "with our hearts in our hands". They urged that Catalan industry was essential to the successful prosecution of the war but that it needed materials.

We explained our military possibilities [said Santillán]. We pointed out the importance of the Aragon front for forging an economic link between Catalonia and the heavy industry of the Basque country and with the coal mining zone of Asturias... We explained to him that if we were given the financial aid we needed we could smash the enemy by ourselves, and we deplored the fact that the Central Government

1. The Government stock at the start of the Civil War was 2,258,569,908 pesetas worth of gold. Salvador de Madariaga (Spain (London: Jonathan Cape, 1942), p.393. On November 6, 1936, 510,079,529 grams (worth about 1,581,642,100 pesetas) of this gold arrived in Moscow, sent by Dr. Juan Negrín, the then Minister of Finance. Araquistain, op. cit., p.20.

because of a stupid hatred of Catalonia and out of fear of the revolution, of the people, who represented the real Spain, should block our work, which would bring victory and salvation for all.

We asked for a small advance loan for aviation equipment and to buy some arms which were being offered us. Giral seemed to think we were right and ordered the money given us. But the orders of the central government had a very limited effectiveness....

We left the Prime Minister, convinced that we had touched a sensible cord and that the future relations between Madrid and Catalonia would not be so sour, and that we would be spared from the systematic sabotage which we had suffered up to then.

In a little while the Giral Government fell and we were left with only a memory of everything we had discussed. Largo Caballero succeeded Giral. But the same old policy of distrust of Catalonia continued, denying salt and water to the Aragon front, which was really the only front which could hasten the end of the war.¹

Later in September, Durruti himself asked Largo Caballero for arms and Mariano Vázquez, secretary of the Regional Committee of the CNT in Catalonia, and Juan P. Fabregas, CNT delegate on the Council of Economy, went to Madrid to plead for some of the gold stock.

1. Abad de Santillán, Por Qué Perdimos la Guerra, pp.105-06.

Neither arms nor gold came. A number of anarchists decided to take the gold from the Bank of Spain in Madrid by force. According to Santillan, three thousand men were ready to move it onto special trains. But the National Committee and some other leading figures of the CNT got wind of the project and said no.¹

Fabregas discussed the taut relations between Catalonia and the Madrid Government at a Regional Plenum in Barcelona on September 24. The Central Government, he said, in surely one of the mildest descriptions of a revolution yet coined, "had little sympathy for the practical work going on in Catalonia". We asked the Caballero Government, said Fabregas, for one loan of 800,000,000 pesetas and another of 30,000,000 with which to buy war goods and a third of 150,000,000 francs to acquire raw materials. As security we put up a thousand million pesetas in stocks and bonds which savings banks had on deposit in the Bank of Spain. Finally for safety we urged that all the gold supply be moved to Catalonia or that at least 400,000,000 pesetas of it be allotted

1. Abad de Santillan, Por Que Perdimos la Guerra, p.113.

to provide for the needs of Catalonia. Our every plea was refused.¹

Major Jose Martín Blázquez, a high official in the Republican War Ministry with an extreme antipathy toward the anarchists, listened to a parade of grievances against the Madrid Government from Eugenio Vallejo, the CNT secretary of the Barcelona War Industries Committee. "Unfortunately" said Martín Blázquez, "some of them were not unjustified".²

You want us [said Vallejo] to put the industries of Catalonia at the disposal of Madrid...and now you want to take our lorries. But the Government refuses to grant us foreign exchange, which prevents us from buying raw materials and coal, and condemns our industries to unemployment. You people in Madrid are idiotic enough to order your army uniforms from the rickety industries of Valencia, simply because you are frightened of the revolution and don't want to come to terms with us. Catalonia possesses perhaps the only textile and clothing industry in Europe capable of turning out in the space of two months enough outfits not only for our pathetic little army, but for the whole German Army as well. But, as the Finance Minister won't allow us foreign exchange, we can't buy raw materials and our industries are at a standstill...³

What was the condition of help to Catalonia? That the Committee of Antifascist Militias, the symbol of the

1. "Al Pleno Regional de Sindicatos", Solidaridad Obrera, No. 1388 (September 25, 1936), 3.

2. José Martín Blázquez, I Helped to Build an Army: Civil War Memoirs of a Spanish Staff Officer (London: Secker and Warburg, 1939), p.268.

3. Ibid., p.269.

supremacy of the armed revolutionary proletariat in Catalonia, should be dissolved. We were told "again and again", said Santillan, that:

So long as we persisted in keeping it...no arms would come to Catalonia nor would we receive loans with which to buy them abroad nor would we be supplied with raw materials for industry. And as to lose the war was to lose everything, to return to a state like that which prevailed in the Spain of a Ferdinand VII; convinced that the drive given by us and our people could not disappear from all the militarized armed bodies which the central Government was planning and from the new economic order, we left the Militias Committee to join the Government of the Generalitat in the Council of Defense and in other vital departments of the autonomous government. For the first time in the history of the modern social movement, the anarchists entered and became part of a Government.¹

1. Abad de Santillan, Por Que Perdimos la Guerra, p.116. Dr. Franz Borkenau writes in a recent book, European Communism (London: Faber and Faber, 1953), p.170: "As a condition of sending men and material Moscow had secured the inclusion of two communist members -- Vicente Uribe and Jesus Hernandez -- in the government of Caballero, the socialist leader, and of other communists in the autonomous government of Catalonia... In joining the governments of Spain and of Catalonia the communists insisted that the anarchists...should also join..."

The writer has seen no evidence whatsoever to show that the communists were a significant factor in the decision of the CNT to join the Catalan Government; at the stage of the game when the CNT decided to join the Generalitat Council the communists were in no position to insist on anything, much less on the CNT participating in a government. That they were pleased by this move, and that their influence was indeed important in deciding the CNT to join the Madrid Government in November are matters apart. There are times when Dr. Borkenau's scorn for the citation of evidence weakens his case. It should be said nonetheless that the pages in his latest book which refer to Spain contain an admirably lucid summary of the political side of the Civil War.

The CNT agreed upon this step at a Plenum of Local and Comarcal Federations which approved a recommendation prepared by delegates from Guixols, Hospitalet, the Regional CNT Committee and the Peninsular Committee of the FAI. "There was only minority opposition to going into the Generalitat Government", said José Peirats (who himself was among that minority).¹ The most persistent voices in attacking the CNT participation were three anarchist newspapers: Acracia of Lerida, Ideas of Hospitalet and Nosotros of Valencia. In an attempt ^{to} pacify the recalcitrant in its ranks, the CNT insisted that the new Government be called a Council and not a Government; the disguise was naturally apparent to all. The members of the new "Council" were:

First Councillor and Finance	José Tarradellas	Esquerra
Culture	Ventura Gassol	Esquerra
Internal Security	Artemio Aiguadé	Esquerra
Economy	Juan P. Fabregas	CNT
Supplies	Juan J. Domenech	CNT
Health and Social Assistance	Antonio García Birlan	CNT
Public Services	Juan Comorera	PSUC
Labor and Public Works	Miguel Valdes	PSUC
Agriculture	José Calvet	Rabassaires
Justice	Andrés Nin	POUM
Defense	Díaz Sandino	expert
Without portfolio	Rafael Closas	Acción Catalana

1. In an interview with the writer, September 12, 1952. Toulouse.

The "immediate program" of the Council called for: concentration of all efforts on the war, a unified command, coordination of all fighting organizations, the creation of compulsory militias and the strengthening of discipline; and the putting into practice "immediately" of the economic measures announced in August by the Council of Economy.¹

With the constitution of the Generalitat Council in September the political naivete of the anarcho-syndicalists became obvious. Perhaps one should call it good faith. When in July the Committee of Militias was formed, the CNT, bewailed Jacinto Torrho:

...committed the mistake .. child of its absurd generosity -- of placing the U.G.T., a nominal organization in Catalonia, of the P.S.U.C., a party of four, all of them chiefs, and of the republican fractions, at the same level....²

Torrho's hindsight permits him to protest too much. In July the CNT could still hope that by allowing the UGT more strength on the Militias Committee that its support in

1. See above, pp. 326-27.

2. Torrho, La Independencia de España, p.208.

the region really demanded, the CNT might receive similar favors in areas where the UGT was predominant.

There are, moreover, two other instances which show that the anarcho-syndicalists were sensitive indeed to political maneuvers prejudicial to their position. They refused, for example, to do away completely with the Generalitat although the power was in fact in the Militias Committee. By preserving at least, a facade of normality, through retaining the state structure, the CNT hoped that the revolution in Catalonia would be less likely to be jeopardized by unfavorable international opinion. The anarchists had themselves stayed out of the Generalitat Government in July and August because they realized that even a Government which contained revolutionaries would engender fears abroad.¹ That the preservation of the state mechanism proved later to be one of the chief obstacles to the social revolution was another complication of course. Still, without the revival of the coordinating function of the Generalitat the military forces in Catalonia might have suffered defeat in the field sooner than they did. This sort of argument can go on and on; in 1936 and 1937 it did.

1. Federica Montseny, in an interview with the writer, September 12, 1952, Toulouse.

A second example of the awareness and ready response of the CNT to a hostile move had occurred on August 1, when three PSUC members took posts in the Generalitat Government. They did not last a week. The CNT had no intention of allowing the Generalitat to brush aside the Militias Committee and claim to represent both the Esquerra and the working-class organizations.¹ The CNT said "Out!" and the psuquistas left.

But now, in September, the anarcho-syndicalists continued to allow the other organizations, all of them but the POUM declaredly anti-revolutionary, representation on the Council in the same proportion that these organizations had enjoyed on the Militias Committee! The CNT was clearly outnumbered. Together the POUM and CNT had four seats; the Esquerra, PSUC and the others had seven. It was not a good trade. At last, said one writer, the Generalitat could promulgate decrees with the assurance that they were going to be obeyed. The entrance of the CNT would give the

1. Borkenau, The Spanish Cockpit, p.88. For the members of the Generalitat Governments of August 1, which contained, three representatives of the PSUC, seven of the Esquerra, one of Acci3n Catalana, one Rabassaire and one expert; and the members of the August 5 Council, which contained no members of the PSUC, see Ossorio y Gallardo, op. cit., p.183.

Generalitat genuine authority.¹ Broadly speaking this is true but some CNT members continued to resist the orders of the Generalitat, CNT councillors or not. Many militiamen, for example, stubbornly resisted being drawn into the regular army. Yet the power of the newly formed Catalan Government was no longer a paper rule. The rollback of the revolutionary advances began to come.

On October 2 the dissolution of the Committee of Militias was announced. One week later the Generalitat published a decree dissolving all the revolutionary committees which had arisen after the July fighting. These committees were to be replaced by Ayuntamientos composed of representatives of political parties and syndical organizations -- in the same proportion as their strength on the Catalan Council. The new municipal organizations were to attend to all the tasks which the local committees, dominated by the workers, had heretofore been handling: general administration, public works, cultural affairs and defense.² The Regional Committee.

1. Francisco y Antonio Graciani, Luces de Revolución (Apuntes para la Historia), Cuaderno No. 3 (Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, n.d.), p.75.

2. For the text of this decree see "El Consejo de la Generalidad: Constitución de los Consejos Municipales: "Decreto", Solidaridad Obrera, No.1402 (October 11, 1936), 16.

of the CNT immediately declared that all committees and unions should assist in forming the new municipal councils as rapidly as possible.¹ The workers' committees, a network of local revolutionary governments, were on the way out. The Central Committee of the Militias had died. The social revolution was still alive but it was not becoming any healthier.

With the CNT in the Generalitat Council and bound therefore to its decisions and with the workers' committees abolished, the next step in the recovery of governmental power concerned the organs of revolutionary justice. This was a process which has been described in an earlier chapter.² At the same time as this gradual dismantling of the structure of social revolution in Catalonia, the CNT drew farther away from a policy of revolution by a very important change of front at the national level. From their initial decision to collaborate in the Generalitat Council the anarcho-syⁿdicalists moved to collaboration in the Government of the Republic.

1. Boletín de Información, CNT AIT FAI, No.74 (October 12, 1936), 2.

2. See above, pp. 294-96.

B. The CNT Enters the Government of the Republic.

On November 4, 1936, four representatives of the CNT became members of the cabinet of Largo Caballero. The anarcho-syndicalists could now share in the direction of the defense of the Republic but they had paid a heavy tariff. The CNT had pressed for the right to join in the decision-making on a national scale before this, as we shall see, but they had not anticipated so severe a wrench from their anti-statist principles.

In August Solidaridad Obrera demanded the formation in Madrid of a Comité Nacional de Milicias, which would be composed of representatives of the syndical and political organizations on the Loyalist side.¹ This proposal was the earliest inkling that the CNT and FAI were determined to have a place in the national management of the war without actually participating in the Government. A National Committee of Militias was the first device they contrived to extricate themselves from the embarrassment of craving a political power from which doctrinally they were pledged to abstain -- at least if it were called a "Government".

1. "¿Mando único ? 'Sí, pero a base de la formación del Comité Nacional de Milicias Antifascistas", No. 1364 (August 28, 1936), 8.

On September 17 the CNT took an important decision at a National Pl^enum of Regionals in Madrid. It concerned the participation of the CNT in the guidance of the war outside Catalonia. The anarcho-syndicalists had just been tempted by Largo Caballero with ministerial posts; they had held aloof. But even earlier than the formation of the September Government there were indications of the future capitulation of the CNT to the enticements of Caballero. Federica Montseny and Pedro Herrera, another top anarchist leader, held an interview with Largo Caballero before September 6 to propose to him a National Militias Committee, or Defense Council, to rule the Republic. Caballero replied that there should be only one Government, legitimate and recognized by all, and not another Junta; we were not going to imitate Franco. If you want to enter my Government, he told the CNT delegates, come in, but no "Consejo".¹

The September 17 plenum only changed the name of the National Militias Committee which the CNT had publicly proposed to a "Consejo Nacional de Defensa". It was this

1. Federica Montseny, in an interview with the writer, September 12, 1952, Toulouse.

() National Defense Council (CND) which was to be at the core of anarcho-syndicalist demands throughout the following weeks. In the press, in public meetings and on posters, the CNT dinned away at its Defense Council scheme. At four huge meetings in Barcelona, Valencia, Madrid and Malaga, the CNT explained its new overture.

() The Consejo Nacional de Defensa, said the CNT, would be formed of five delegates of the UGT, five of the CNT, and four republicans. This new organ would direct the military struggle against the insurgents and would be responsible for economic reconstruction and coordination on the home front. The CNT stipulated that the President of the Council should be Largo Caballero and assumed that Azana would continue as head of the Republic. The rest of the demands which accompanied the Defense Council project were in effect an extension to all of Loyalist Spain of the organs born of the social revolution in Catalonia. Dominating the CNT program was the insistence that the rest of anti-insurgent Spain rally to the example of Catalonia. In addition to the National Defense Council, the CNT demanded:

2. Local, provincial, regional and national federalism in all aspects of political and economic administration, the implantation of Defense Councils,..., and the suppression of the Ayuntamientos, Deputations and Civil Governments. The regions will have power to decide the proportion of the anti-fascist forces on the Regional Councils of Defense.

3. Transformation of the Ministries into Departments....

4. Creation of the single popular militia for safeguarding Public Order. Creation of compulsory war militias and control of the militias by the Councils of Workers and Militiamen formed of mixed Commissions made up of the U.G.T. and the C.N.T. Simplification of commands, limiting them to the role of military experts. Creation of a single Military Direction by the formation of a Commissariat of War named by the National Council of Defense with representatives of the three sectors fighting against fascism.

5. Establishment of a Popular Tribunal and a provisional Juridical Body, named by common agreement of the National Council of Defense and the syndical and political anti-fascist organizations.

6. Socialization of the bank, liquidation of usury and the final elimination of the national, provincial and local Debt.

7. Socialization of the property of the Church, of the landowners, big industry, big business, transport in general, as well as of any Enterprises which are proved to have supported the rebellion; workers' control in industries and in private commerce; use by the workers' Syndicates of the means of production and exchange which are socialized; ...the use of planning for big industry and the most important crops.

8. Struggle for peace on the basis of the international action of the proletariat, reorganization of diplomacy and calling of an international Conference of all anti-fascist elements with a view toward achieving effective solidarity.¹

On the basis of this program the CNT proposed a National Alliance to the UGT and resolved that within ten days a second national plenum should review the results of the negotiations of the National Committee with the UGT, the Government and the republican parties.

By proposing a Government -- for of course this is what the National Defense Council was -- weighted with twice as many members of the UGT and CNT as were allotted to the republican parties, the anarcho-syndicalists were demanding that control of the war be placed in the hands of the revolutionary workers' organizations. With their call for the establishment of Regional Councils of Defense, the CNT was simply pushing for the creation of Militia Committees in other regions.

The expectation that the rest of Republican Spain would conform to the pattern which, owing to anarcho-syndicalist domination, prevailed in but one section of

1. "El Importantísimo Dictamen Aprobado Hoy Por el Pleno Nacional de Regionales de las C.N.T.", CNT, No. 406 (September 17, 1936), 1.

the country, was somewhat optimistic. Far from even wanting to match the pace of social change in Catalonia, the right-wing socialists and the republicans and communists of Madrid, and all the political and trade-union groups in Barcelona, including the UGT, fought vigorously to check and if possible to roll back the anarcho-syndicalist upheaval. Ranged with the CNT in Catalonia were only the members of the small but militant POUM, while outside Catalonia only the left socialists and the UGT pressed for social revolution. There was no chance whatsoever for a National Defense Council.

But the September 17 plenum had instructed a delegation to present the idea to the Prime Minister. Horacio Prieto the secretary of the National Committee of the CNT and a man strongly in favour of participation in the Government¹, had not attended the plenum at which the CND was proposed. He had been detained in Bilbao and could not come at once. He arrived shortly after the meeting and took charge of carrying out the agreements of the plenum.²

1. After the Civil War, Prieto proposed the formation in France of a Partido Libertario Español, to be "a libertarian political organization". Horacio Prieto, El Movimiento Libertario: España y Sus Necesidades Urgentes (Paris: Ediciones "Galería", n.d.), pp.17-18.

2. Federica Montseny, in an interview with the writer September 12, 1952, Toulouse.

In the second round of negotiations with Caballero, the CNT protested against the participation of two communists in his Government and demanded that there be neither communists nor anarchists. As the anarcho-syndicalists had no representatives in the Government, this was a plea which could not lead to sacrifice on their part. Only the communists would have suffered. Caballero replied, 'When you anarchists are ready, come in, but I am forming the Government'. He refused the National Council of Defense.¹

On September 28 the second National Plenum heard Horacio Prieto report Caballero's opposition to the CND. Thereupon the plenum "gave a large vote of confidence to the National Committee so that, in view of the impossibility of setting up the National Defense Council..., the intervention of the C.N.T. in the Government might be obtained".² Prieto again visited Caballero who once more avowed that 'You have your place in the Government. I'm not like Companys. Either do things clearly, or don't do them.'³

1. Federica Montseny, in an interview with the writer, September 12, 1952, Toulouse.

2. Informe de la Delegación de la C.N.T. al Congreso Extraordinario de la A.I.T. [Diciembre de 1937] y resoluciones del mismo, pp. 97-98.

3. Federica Montseny, ibid.

Prieto joined the National Committee in Madrid. The decision was made to enter the Government "in order to avoid our being completely out of the direction of Spanish public life."¹

Prieto and Caballero then commenced discussions on who would represent the CNT. Four names were proposed: Federica Montseny and Juan García Oliver to symbolize the FAI, and Juan Peiró and Juan López for the moderates. Azana barred García Oliver as an ex-robber and ex-convict. Said the CNT: "We accept no veto".² This was in the last days of October. Through the course of negotiations the CNT had continued its campaign for the Defense Council. But it was a campaign which had become completely unreal. The events of the war had been forcing the CNT nearer and nearer to the outer edges: public campaign or no, the anarcho-syndicalists were about to yield and join the Government of the Spanish Republic. What were the reasons which caused the negotiations just discussed? Why did the CNT enter the Madrid Government?

1. Federica Montseny in an interview with the writer, September 12, 1952, Toulouse.

2. Ibid.

One of the causes of CNT participation in the Central Government was the same as that which had induced intervention in the Generalitat Council: the hope of arms and financial assistance from Madrid.

A second very important reason for joining the Caballero cabinet was the extremely perilous military situation. Irun and San Sebastian had fallen, then Toledo and now the Franco forces were at the very gates of Madrid. The capitulation of the capital seemed imminent and the anarcho-syndicalists understood very well that the fall of Madrid would mean general collapse before long. If Madrid were lost the war would be lost. In so critical an hour the CNT demanded participation in the direction of the fight. "It is in honor of the very grave situation through which Madrid is living," said CNT, "... that the C.N.T. makes no argument about names. If Council, Council; if Government, Government..."¹ As is to symbolize the change in CNT policy, Durruti's men,² the anarchists from Catalonia, began marching to Castile, the capital of socialism. 'Madrid! Madrid!' was everywhere the cry.

1. "Las Circunstancias Mandan", No. 437 (October 23, 1936), p.1.

2. The anarchists lost their most popular figure with the war but four months old when Durruti was killed in Madrid on November 20. For an account of Durruti's death see Ariel, ? Cómo Murio Durruti ? (Toulouse: Comité de Relaciones de la Regional del Centro, 1945).

The battle to defend Madrid dramatized as did nothing else the third cause which drove the CNT into the Central Government: the startling and sudden rise in influence of the Communist Party.¹ In spite of fantastic assertions that the Civil War was the consequence of a Bolshevik conspiracy, the Communist Party in Spain had never amounted to anything at all before 1936 and it amounted to little more in the first six weeks of the war. The Partido Comunista Español was founded on April 13, 1921, as the result of a split in the Socialist Party. The Partido Socialista Obrero Español had refused in that year to adhere to the Third International. This rejection provoked the breakaway, a very small one.

Two of the best knownⁿ leaders of the new party were Andrés Nin and Joaquín Maurín, although they came from the ranks of the CNT. They had been largely responsible for affiliating the CNT to the Third International while in Moscow in 1921. When the CNT disaffiliated in 1922 at Zaragoza they refused to leave the Comintern. In 1930 Moscow expelled nearly the whole party, which need not have been an arduous task, charging Trotskyism and other

1. For a fourth cause of CNT participation in the November Government, see below, p. 407.

lapses from grace. In 1932 the Comintern uncovered fresh traces of heresy; the entire party leadership was wiped out once more. When the Republic was proclaimed in 1931, the Spanish Communist Party numbered only eight hundred members, according to Pravda's own correspondent in Spain.¹ By early 1936 party membership had crawled to the figure of 3,000.²

Between 1929 and 1934 the communists in Spain spent most of their energy in attacking the other working-class organizations. There was no question of a united front with the anarchists or socialists. In 1930 the PCE tried to wrest followers from the CNT in Seville in particular by a so-called "Committee of Reconstruction of the CNT". This was at a time when the CNT was on the way to its peak of strength. Although the communists undertook a campaign for "syndical unity" two years later, their

1. Mikhail Efimovich Kol'tsov, "Khudozhestvennaia literatura", Ispanskii Dnevnik (Moscow 1938), p.84, quoted in David T. Cattell, Communist Policy in Spain During the Spanish Civil War: 1936-1939, typescript manuscript of unpublished doctoral dissertation accepted at Columbia University, 1953, p.34. The writer is indebted to Dr. Cattell's dissertation for much of the development of communist Civil War policy.

2. W.G. Krivitsky, I was Stalin's Agent (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1939), pp.96-97.

actual revolutionary and anti-collaborationist line did not change until the mid-1930's. The new swerve to the right was dictated of course by the paramount consideration of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. The need of the USSR to protect the Franco-Russian alliance and to maintain cordial relations with the democratic powers had become more and more urgent with the danger of mounting German strength. Socialists who had hitherto been assailed as "social fascists", bourgeois democrats who had been no less kindly described, found themselves in the sudden embrace of the Popular Front. The role of the communists in the Popular Front days in Spain was much less important than they advertised. It consisted largely in applauding Azana loudly at republican rallies in 1935 and in sheltering under the wing of Largo Caballero's sudden radicalism in 1936 -- while themselves inoffensively pressing a gentler program of support for the democratic Republic. Certainly their most effective coup was the leadership which they quickly assumed over the Socialist Youth organization when in April 1936 the Communist and Socialist Youth organizations merged. Yet so small were their numbers, so weak their voice, when compared with the anarcho-syndicalists and socialists, that the Spanish

communists were no serious influence on the political development of Spain until the autumn of 1936.

In October 1936 the Spanish communists commenced to become very important indeed. The initial reason was arms from the Soviet Union. The USSR had already sent food and clothing to Spain at the start of the war but with the signing of the Non-Intervention Agreement in August, slowed down the campaigns for relief contributions in Russia. These drives picked up again in the middle of September and at the end of October five ships laden with food left Odessa for Spain. In the same month arms, tanks and planes began to arrive from the USSR.¹ They came just in time to be thrown into the struggle to save Madrid and bring the communists an enormous increase in prestige.

Not only were there Russian planes flying overhead but the communists were able to appear on the Madrid front in November with the International Brigades which communist parties throughout the world had been recruiting. There were no Russians in them but the Brigades were controlled by the communists in command posts and by the network

1. "By the middle of October, shiploads of arms began to reach republican Spain..." Krivitsky, op. cit., p.105.

of political commissars. From October and November on, the Communist Party spoke not with the peevish voice of outraged dialecticians but with the full power and weight of anticipated Soviet aid. For aside from Mexico, the Non-Intervention Pact deprived the Republic of the opportunity to buy weapons from any other nation. The Soviet Union had the weapons and so called the tune and the tune was, "Stop this revolution now." The exigencies of Soviet foreign policy demanded that there be a policy of moderation, not of social ferment in Spain. The counter-revolution, led by the Communist Party, began with fierce intensity.

In Catalonia the chief organ of communist policy in the fight against the changes wrought by the CNT and FAI was the Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalunya, or PSUC. The PSUC was formed shortly after the July rising by four groups; the Unió Socialista de Catalunya of Juan Comorera, the Catalan section of the Socialist Party, the Catalan Proletarian Party (a split off the Esquerra), and the Communist Party of Catalonia. The fusion accepted the Twenty-One Points and affiliated to the Comintern.

At first glance the new party would seem to have been merely an amalgam of several workers' parties so small as to be of little significance alongside the mass following of the CNT in Catalonia. But the PSUC began to grow and very rapidly because of the policy it advocated. Less than three weeks after the July rising the Spanish communists had decried the wave of collectivizations, industrial and agricultural, and insisted that the workers had the picture all wrong. The war was strictly a question of putting down a military revolt. The protection of the democratic Republic was the slogan and no nonsense about social revolution. The Communist Party immediately aligned itself with the far right wing of the Republican side, the Unión Republicana of Diego Martínez Barrio, which it should be remembered, was a splinter group from the old Radicals of Alexander Lerroux.

Soon the PSUC and the UGT, which in Catalonia was under the control of the PSUC, began to draw to themselves more and more of the Shopkeepers, small managers, government employees, local politicians and others who had been overwhelmed by the shock of the CNT revolution but had lacked any base from which to resist it. The PSUC and UGT expansion became particularly rapid after the arrival of

Soviet aid and the International Brigades and after the beginning of heavy campaigning for new members. The Esquerra and the anti-revolutionary middle class autonomists who gave it most support and the richer peasants in recoil from the collectivization which was often forced upon them ^{the} by advancing anarchist militias thus found in the PSUC and UGT a new and vigorous champion of their interests. Less than two weeks after the start of hostilities in July, the CADCI, the central union of white collar workers, joined the UGT. But perhaps the most unusual addition was an organization called the Gremio de Entidades de Pequeños Comerciantes, or GEPCI. The GEPCI, which was a kind of alliance of employers' unions, affiliated to the UGT. The central office of the GEPCI was located on the premises of the Catalan textile-mill managers, and the president of the textile 'workers' section of the GEPCI was the former president of the association of Catalan textile manufacturers.¹ Accordingly to the report of a Belgian socialist observer, the UGT, which before July had 9,000 members in Catalonia, had by early 1937, 50,000.²

1. Rudolf Rocker, The Tragedy of Spain (New York: Freie Arbeiter Stimme, 1937), p.23.

2. Quoted by Camilo Berneri, "La Contrarrevolución en Marcha", printed March 5, 1937, in Guerra di Classe (Barcelona), and reprinted in Entre la Revolución y las Trincheras (Rennes: Ediciones Tierra y Libertad, 1946), p.30.

Confronted by the menace of the tremendous spurt in communist prestige as a result of the Soviet aid, the foreign brigades and the rapidly growing feeling that communist organizational efficiency could produce military victories; suffering on the Aragon front and on the Catalan homefront from continued lack of arms and materials; distrustful of the Government's ability to win the war -- the CNT demanded to be given seats in the cabinet.

At this time [said Federica Montseny] the organization was in a moment of panic. The communists, our irreconcilable enemies, were in the Central Government...The situation in Madrid was grave. People thought we were lost and that our only salvation would be to have our people in the Government...All this decided us...If Franco doesn't massacre us, we thought, the communists will.¹

1. In an interview with the writer, September 12, 1952. In view of the evidence which the writer has given here, the statement of Dr. Borkenau (European Communism, p.170) that the CNT joined the Republican Government at communist insistence would seem to be in error. One of the causes of the CNT decision to enter was, as I have said, the growth in communist influence. But the implication that the CNT was somehow pressured into the move by communist insistence, which is what Dr. Borkenau would have us think, is disproved by the fact that the CNT was begging to be admitted, not holding back. Dr. Borkenau is certainly correct however in pointing out that the communists wanted the anarcho-syndicalists to enter "so as to tie them down to the decisions of a government which, almost at once, found itself helplessly subjected to communist pressure, since the communists provided or withheld indispensable armament deliveries accordingly to its conduct..." Ibid. It may be permissible to add that the role of the communists and the Soviet Government in the Spanish Civil War should be, at least to many Loyalist sympathizers, reprehensible enough without the necessity of finding the hand of Moscow behind every decision.

In Barcelona Horacio Prieto met with the committees and with leading militants. "Do we join the Government or not?" he asked. "Four places are reserved for us. If we don't take the seats they go to the socialists and to the Communist Party."¹ The CNT had been out-bargained. The anarcho-syndicalists wanted five seats in the Government; Largo Caballero cut the figure to four.

Federica Montseny at first refused the bid to become a cabinet minister. García Oliver stipulated that if she did not enter, neither would he: responsibility had to be joint.² "Horacio Prieto and Mariano Vazquez insisted", said Señora Montseny. Therefore:

...I asked for 24 hours to think the matter over. I consulted my father who, thoughtfully, said: 'You already know what this means. In fact it is the liquidation of anarchism and of the C.N.T. Once in power you will not rid yourselves of Power...' ³

1. Federica Montseny, in an interview with the writer, September 12, 1952, Toulouse.

2. Ibid.

3. Boletín Interior del M.L.E. (Movimiento Libertario Español) - C.N.T. de Francia (September-October 1945), quoted in Juan López, "Los Principios Libertarios Ante la Política Española", Material de Discusión... (Brighton, England), Octava Serie (February 15, 1946), p.25.

On November 3 between four and five hundred members of the CNT and FAI gathered in the Sala Grande of the anarcho-syndicalist headquarters in Layetana Street in Barcelona. Vazquez, Prieto, Herrera, and Germinal de Sousa for the FAI Peninsular Committee, were all there as well as militants from Catalonia and other regions. But "it was a meeting to accept accomplished facts", said Senora Montseny.¹ The following day Solidaridad Obrera declared:

The entrance of the C.N.T. into the central Government is one of the most transcendental events in the political history of our country. The C.N.T. has always, by principle and conviction, been anti-statist and the enemy of every form of Government.

But circumstances, nearly always greater than human will, although shaped by it, have disfigured the nature of the Government and of the Spanish State.

The Government, in this present hour, as regulator of the organs of the State, has ceased to be a force of oppression against the working class, just as the State no longer represents the organism which divides society into classes. And both will fail still more to oppress the people with the participation in them of elements of the C.N.T.

.....

1. Federica Montseny in an interview with the writer, September 12, 1952, Toulouse.

Our comrades will carry to the Government the collective or majority will of the working masses previously gathered in great general assemblies. They will bring no personal or capricious judgment but the decisions freely taken by the hundreds of thousands of workers organized in the C.N.T. There is a historic fate weighing on everything. And the C.N.T. accepts this fate in order to serve the country, with its interest placed in winning the war soon and seeing that the popular revolution is not disfigured. We have absolute confidence that the comrades chosen to represent the C.N.T. in the Government will know how to do their duty and fulfill the mission which has been entrusted to them...¹

Jose Peirats, as one of the anarchists who opposed the participation of the CNT in the Government and who would therefore not be disposed to play down any genuine hostility to the action, makes this significant comment:

Did all the militants think the same way? Did this new posture of the C.N.T. count on the support of international anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism? With the exception of some minority currents, who made their protests in their own newspapers, through Committees and meetings, plenums and assemblies of the organization, the sad truth is that the major part of the militants were affected by a real fatalism, a direct result of the tragic realities of the war.²

1. "La C.N.T., El Gobierno y El Estado", No.1423 (November 4 1936), 1.

2. Peirats, op. cit., vol. I, p.236.

Here is the Government formed under the leadership
of Largo Caballero on November 4, 1936:

Prime Minister and War	Francisco Largo Caballero	Socialist
Foreign Affairs	Julio Alvarez del Vayo	Socialist
Navy and Air	Indalecio Prieto	Socialist
Finance	Juan Negrín	Socialist
Interior	Angel Galarza	Socialist
Labor	Anastasio de Gracia	Socialist
Public Instruction	Jesús Hernández	Communist
Agriculture	Vicente Uribe	Communist
Public Works	Julio Just	Republican
Communications	Bernardo Giner de los Ríos	Republican
Propaganda	Carlos Esplá	Republican
Justice	Juan García Oliver	CNT
Industry	Juan Peiró	CNT
Health	Federica Montseny	CNT
Commerce	Juan López	CNT
Without portfolio	José Giral	Republican
	Manuel Irujo	Basque Nationalist
	Jaime Aiguadé	Esquerra

The anarcho-syndicalists finally had that for which they had been clamoring: ministries in the Republican Government. But they did not get the ones they wanted nor as many as they wanted. In the last days of October Largo Caballero had publicly declared that the CNT desired to enter the Government but that the five posts which they sought were too many. The CNT had demanded Finance, War, Labor, Public Works and Industry, and Commerce or¹ Agriculture. The CNT received Justice, Commerce, Industry and Health.

1. CNT, No. 444 (October 30, 1936), 7.

But Commerce and Industry had been only one portfolio before, while there had been no Ministry of Health at all. Thus in reality the CNT got but two ministries, none of which could compare in importance with those held by the socialists. As one anarchist critic said, "Of the four Ministries given to the C.N.T., not one was important at the time nor could influence the march of events".¹ And the march of events were, in the months after November, increasingly unfavourable to the CNT.

The rest of our account of the history of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists can be summed up as the progressive attack on the positions of the CNT by the forces of the right wing of the Republican coalition, an attack led by the Communist Party. In the final chapter we shall discuss some of the fronts on which this onslaught was made until its culmination in the May Days battle in Barcelona and the departure of the National Confederation of Labor from the Government of the Republic.

1. Lazarillo de Tormes, op. cit., p.83.

CHAPTER XVEND OF A REVOLUTION

The months from November 1936, when the CNT entered the Republican Government, and May 1937, when the CNT left, were those of the downhill slide of the social revolution. The PSUC, well armed from November onwards and able to exploit the bait of Soviet aid, sought out point after point at which to attack the anarcho-syndicalists. There was first a drive to exterminate the small but politically symbolic POUM. Then came a campaign to abolish the workers' committees which still fulfilled important functions. Both the PSUC and the Central Government in Valencia made strenuous attempts to remove from workers' control the organs which had been created to secure public order behind the lines and to restore the old police forces. Continually both the Governments of Barcelona and Valencia tried to bring about the disarming of the anarcho-syndicalists. Of great importance was the drive by the PSUC and the Communist Party to militarize the popular militias and bring them under government control. Throughout all these months the increasing battle for political supremacy in Catalonia and elsewhere in Republican Spain

was reflected in violent incidents between the anti-revolutionary and revolutionary forces within the Loyalist camp. Vilifying propaganda, stringent censorship, secret police, political prisons, executions on ideological grounds -- all made their appearance in Republican Spain.

It is not difficult to identify the group responsible for the reign of terror that gripped Loyalist Spain in 1937. Outside Spain conservative forces represented the Civil War as a struggle between the forces of Bolshevik revolution and Christianity. Actually it was the Communist Party which championed the interests of the bourgeoisie and those Loyalist Catholics with whom many non-Spanish conservatives would have had most in common. Only what may be called a kind of pious self-deception prevented many leftist sympathizers with the Popular Front outside Spain from refusing to acknowledge that the group which fought most furiously to crush the proletarian revolution in Spain was the Partido Comunista Español.

A. The Drive Against the POUM.

The Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista was founded on September 29, 1935, by a fusion of Andrés Nin's Izquierda Comunista and Joaquín Maurín's Bloque Obrero

y. Campesino.¹ Nin had been a Trotskyist; Maurín had not been. But Nin had refused Trotsky's counsel to take the Spanish Trotskyists into the Socialist Party in an attempt, obviously ludicrous, to swing the PSOE into the Fourth International.² Master and disciple fell out; accordingly, Trotsky severely criticized the POUM.³ Although the POUM did have a minority fraction which remained Trotskyist in spite of these disagreements the party could more accurately be compared to a Titoist group than anything else. But these nice sectarian distinctions were lost on the communists in view of the fact that the POUM was bitterly anti-Stalinist and, alongside the giant CNT, a militant advocate of the workers' revolution. The POUM, a very small party⁴ which would have been of no great

1. "The negotiations begun some months ago have crystallized, and after extensive discussion within both organizations, the Workers' and Peasants' Block and the Left Communists, at the Congress held on the 29th of September [1935], have decided to fuse into one single party which will be called the PARTIDO OBRERO DE UNIFICACION MARXISTA." "La fusión del Bloque Obrero y Campesino y de la Izquierda Comunista es un hecho", La Batalla, No. 219 (October 4, 1935), 1.

2. Jordi Arquer, in a letter to the writer, May 1, 1953, Paris.

3. See, for example, Leon Trotsky, The Lesson of Spain: The Last Warning (London: Workers' International Press, N.D. written December 7, 1937), p.23.

4. George Orwell (op. cit., p.62) says the figures for POUM membership were given as: July 1936, 10,000; December 1936, 70,000; June 1937, 40,000. "But these are from P.O.U.M. sources; a hostile estimate would probably divide them by four...."